TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the essays included in this volume were written during the war years (1940-1945). Some of them dealt with situations directly arising out of the war and so they carry certain points of emphasis which are no longer valid, at least to the same extent, under changed circumstances of today. Still they are of interest and may help in some way to formulate one's ideas regarding the future and are therefore reprinted. These are mostly editorial notes and comments contributed to the *Advent* (Madras).

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GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION
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PART I

THE WORLD WAR

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BANGALORE

THE WORLD WAR

ITS INNER BEARINGS

This is a war to which even spiritual seekers can hardly remain indifferent with impunity. There are spiritual paths, however, that ask to render unto God what is God's and unto Satan what belongs to Satan; in other words, spirituality is kept apart from what is called worldliness, clean and untouched by the dust and murk of Ignorance—Maya. The injunction accordingly is that they who are worldly must remain worldly, they have no business, no right to meddle with spirituality, and they who are spiritual should, on the other hand, remain strictly spiritual, should have nothing to do with worldliness. Because of this complete divorce between the spiritual and the worldly, the world remains worldly even today, continues to be the empire of unspirituality and obscurity, of suffering and grief, it is

unable to become a dynamic and living expression and embodiment of the Spirit.

Not that spiritual men have not served and worked for the welfare of the world; but their work could not be wholly effective, it was mixed, maimed, temporary in effect. This could not be otherwise, for their activity proceeded from inferior and feebler sources of inspiration and consciousness other than those that are purely spiritual. Firstly, little more was possible for them than to exercise an indirect influence; their spiritual realisation could bring into the life of the world only a reminiscence, an echo, just a touch and a ray from another world. Or, secondly, when they did take part in worldly affairs, their activity could not rise much beyond the worldly standard; it remained enclosed within the sphere of the moral and the conventional, took such forms as, for example, charity and service and philanthropy. Nothing higher than ideas and ideals confined to the moral, that is to say, the mental plane, could be brought into play in the world and its practical life,—even the moral and mental idea itself has often been mistaken for true spirituality. Thus the very ideal of governing or moulding our worldly preoccupations according to a truly spiritual or a supramental

or transcendental consciousness was a rare phenomenon and even where the ideal was found, it is doubtful whether the right means and methods were discovered. Yet the sole secret of changing man's destiny and transmuting the world lies in the discovery and application of a supreme spiritual Conscious-Power.

Humanists once affirmed that nothing that concerned man was alien to them, all came within their domain. The spiritual man too can make the affirmation with the same or even a greater emphasis. Indeed the spiritual consciousness in the highest degree and greatest compass must needs govern and fashion man in his entire being, in all his members and functions. The ideal, as we have said, has seldom been accepted; generally it has been considered as a chimera and an impossibility. That is why, we repeat, even to this day the world has its cup of misery full to the brim—*anityam asukham.*

All this has to be said by way of explanation and apology. For if we are spiritual seekers even then, or rather because of that, we too, we declare, have our say in a matter which looks so mundane as this war. We refuse to own the nature and character so often ascribed to us by the West, which finds a graphic

description in the well-known lines of Matthew Arnold:

> The East bow'd low before the blast
> In patient deep disdain.
> She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again.

In fact, however, there is no insurmountable disparity between spirituality and "worldliness", between meditation and the most "terrible work" — *ghore karmani* : the Gita has definitively proved the truth of the fact millenniums ago. War has not been the monopoly of warriors alone : it will not be much of an exaggeration to say that Avatars, the incarnations of the Divine, have done little else besides that. And what of the Divine Mother herself? The main work of an Avatar is often to subdue the evil-doers, those that follow and pull others to follow the Wrong Path. And the Divine Mother, she who harbours in her bosom the supreme Truth and Consciousness and Bliss, is in one of her essential aspects, the slayer of the Demon, of the Asura.

Now, it is precisely with the Asura that we have to deal in the present war. This is not like other wars —it is not a war of one

country with another, of one group of Imperialists with another, nor is it merely the fierce endeavour of a particular race or nation for world-domination: it is something more than all that. This war has a deeper, a more solemn, almost a grim significance. Some thinkers in Europe, not the mere political leaders, but those who lead in thought and ideas and ideals, to whom something of the inner world is revealed, have realised the true nature of the present struggle and have expressed it in no uncertain terms. Here is what Jules Romains, one of the foremost thinkers and litterateurs of contemporary France, says:

"Since the end of the Middle Ages, conquerors did harm perhaps to civilization, but they never claimed to bring it into question. They ascribed their excesses and crimes to motives of necessity, but never dreamed for a moment to hold them up as exemplary actions on which subject nations were called upon to fashion their morality, their code, their gospel. ...Since the dawn of modern times the accidents of military history in Europe have never meant for her the end of her most precious spiritual and moral values and a sudden annulment of all the work done by the past generations in the direction of mutual respect,

equity, goodwill—or, to put all into a single word, in the direction of humanity."

Modern thinkers do not speak of the Asura—the Demon or the Titan—although the religiously minded sometimes refer to the Anti-Christ; but the real, the inner significance of the terms is lost to a mind nurtured in science and empiricism; they are considered as more or less imaginative symbols for certain undesirable qualities of nature and character. Yet some have perceived and expressed the external manifestation and activities of the Asura in a way sufficient to open men's eyes to the realities involved. Thus they have declared that the present war is a conflict between two ideals, to be sure, but also that the two ideals are so different that they do not belong to the same plane or order; they belong to different planes and different orders. On one side the whole endeavour is to bring man down from the level to which he has arisen in the course of evolution to something like his previous level and to keep him imprisoned there. That this is really their aim, the protagonists and partisans themselves have declared frankly and freely and loudly enough, without any hesitation or reservation. Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' has become the Scripture of the New Order;

it has come with a more categorical imperative, a more supernal authority than the Veda, the Bible or the Koran.

When man was a dweller of the forest, — a jungle man,—akin to his forbear the ape, his character was wild and savage, his motives and impulsions crude, violent, egoistic, almost wholly imbedded in, what we call, the lower vital level; the light of the higher intellect and intelligence had not entered into them. Today there is an uprush of similar forces to possess and throw man back to a similar condition. This new order asks only one thing of man, namely, to be strong and powerful, that is to say, fierce, ruthless, cruel and regimented. Regimentation can be said to be the very characteristic of the order, the regimentation of a pack of wild dogs or wolves. A particular country, nation or race—it is Germany in Europe and, in her wake, Japan in Asia—is to be the sovereign nation or master race (*Herrenvolk*) ; the rest of mankind—other countries and peoples—should be pushed back to the status of servants and slaves, mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. What the helots were in ancient times, what the serfs were in the mediaeval ages, and what the subject peoples were under the worst forms of modern

imperialism, even so will be the entire mankind under the new overlordship, or something still worse. For whatever might have been the external conditions in those ages and systems, the upward aspirations of man were never doubted or questioned—they were fully respected and honoured. The New Order has pulled all that down and cast them to the winds. Furthermore in the new regime, it is not merely the slaves that suffer in a degraded condition, the masters also, as individuals, fare no better. The individual here has no respect, no freedom or personal value. This society or community of the masters even will be like a bee-hive or an ant-hill; the individuals are merely functional units, they are but screws and bolts and nuts and wheels in a huge relentless machinery. The higher and inner realities, the spontaneous inspirations and self-creations of a free soul—art, poetry, literature—sweetness and light—the good and the beautiful—are to be banished for ever; they are to be regarded as things of luxury which enervate the heart, diminish the life-force, distort Nature's own virility. Man perhaps would be the worshipper of Science, but of that Science which brings a tyrannical mastery over material Nature, which serves to pile up tools and instruments, arms and

armaments, in order to ensure a dire efficiency and a grim order in practical life.

Those that have stood against this Dark Force and its overshadowing menace—even though perhaps not wholly by choice or free-will, but mostly compelled by circumstances — yet, because of the stand they have taken, now bear the fate of the world on their shoulders, carry the whole future of humanity in their march. It is of course agreed that to have stood against the Asura does not mean that one has become *sura*, divine or godlike; but to be able to remain human, human instruments of the Divine, however frail, is sufficient for the purpose, that ensures safety from the great calamity. The rule of life of the Asura implies the end of progress, the arrest of all evolution; it means even a reversal for man. The Asura is a fixed type of being. He does not change, his is a hardened mould, a settled immutable form of a particular consciousness, a definite pattern of qualities and activities—*gunakarma*. Asura-nature means a fundamental ego-centricism, violent and concentrated self-will. Change is possible for the human being; he can go downward, but he can move upward too, if he chooses. In the Puranas a distinction has been made between the domain of enjoyment and

the domain of action. Man is the domain of action *par excellence*; by him and through him evolve new and fresh lines of activity and impulsion. The domain of enjoyment, on the other hand, is where we reap the fruits of our past Karma; it is the result of an accumulated drive of all that we have done, of all the movements we have initiated and carried out. It is a status of being where there is only enjoyment, not of becoming where there can be development and new creation. It is a condition of gestation, as it were; there is no new Karma, no initiative or change in the stuff of the consciousness. The Asuras are *bhogamaya purusha*, beings of enjoyment; their domain is a cumulus of enjoyings. They cannot strike out a fresh line of activity, put forth a new mode of energy that can work out a growth or transformation of nature. Their consciousness is an immutable entity. The Asuras do not mend, they can only end. Man can certainly acquire or imbibe Asuric force or Asura-like qualities and impulsions; externally he can often act very much like the Asura; and yet there is a difference. Along with the dross that soils and obscures human nature, there is something more, a clarity that opens to a higher light, an inner core of noble metal which does not submit to any inferior influence.

There is this something More in man which always inspires and enables him to break away from the Asuric nature. Moreover, though there may be an outer resemblance between the Asuric qualities of man and the Asuric qualities of the Asura, there is an intrinsic difference, a difference in tone and temper, in rhythm and vibration, proceeding as they do from different sources. However cruel, hard, selfish, egocentric man may be, he knows, he admits—at times, if not always, at heart, if not openly, subconsciously, if not wholly consciously—that such is not the ideal way, that these qualities are not qualifications, they are unworthy elements and have to be discarded. But the Asura is ruthless, because he regards ruthlessness as the right thing, as the perfect thing, it is an integral part of his swabhava and swadharma, his law of being and his highest good. Violence is the ornament of his character.

The outrages committed by Spain in America, the oppression of the Christians by Imperial Rome, the brutal treatment of Christians by Christians themselves (the Inquisition, that is to say) or the misdeeds of Imperialists generally were wrong and, in many cases, even inhuman and unpardonable. But when we compare with what Nazi Germany

has done in Poland or wants to do throughout the world, we find that there is a difference between the two not only in degree, but in kind. One is an instance of the weakness of man, of his flesh being frail ; the other illustrates the might of the Asura, his very spirit is unwilling. One is undivine ; the other antidivine, positively hostile. They who cannot discern this difference are colour-blind: there are eyes to which all deeper shades of colour are black and all lighter shades white.

The Asura triumphs everywhere for a while because his power is well-built, perfectly organised. Human power is constituted differently and acts differently ; it is full of faults and flaws to start with and for a long time. There is no gap anywhere in the power of the Asura, no tear or stitch—it is streamlined, solid, of one piece ; it is perfection itself in its own kind once for all. Man's being is made up of conflicts and contradictions ; he moves step by step, slowly and laboriously, through gradual purification ; he grows through endeavour and struggle. Man triumphs over the Asura only in so far as he moulds himself in the ways of the divine power. But in the world, the Divine and his powers remain behind, because the field of actuality in front is still the domain of the

Asura. The outer field, the gross vehicle—body and life and mind—all this is constituted by Ignorance and Falsehood; so the Asura can always establish there his influence and hold sway and has actually done so. Man becomes easily an instrument of the Asura, though often unwittingly; the earth is naturally in the firm grasp of the Asura. For the gods to conquer the earth, to establish their rule in the earth consciousness requires labour and endeavour and time.

No doubt, the violences indulged by men in older times, especially when they acted in groups and packs, were often inflamed and inspired by an Asuric influence. But today it must be clearly seen and recognised that it is the Asura himself with the whole band of his army that has descended upon the earth; they have possessed a powerfully organised human collectivity, shaped it in their mould, using it to complete their conquest of mankind and consolidate their definitive reign upon earth.

As we see it we believe that the whole future of mankind, the entire value of earthly life depends upon the issue of the present deadly combat. The path that man has followed so long tended steadily towards progress and evolution—however slow his steps, however

burdened with doubt and faintness his mind and heart in the ascent. But now the crucial parting of the ways looms before him. The question is, will the path of progress be closed to him for ever, will he be compelled to revert to a former unregenerate state or even something worse than that? Or will he remain free to follow that path, rise gradually and infallibly towards perfection, towards a purer, fuller, higher and vaster luminous life? Will man come down to live the life of a blind helpless slave under the clutches of the Asura or even altogether lose his soul and become the legendary demon who carries no head but only a decapitated trunk?

We believe that the war of today is a war between the Asura and men, human instruments of the gods. Man certainly is a weaker vessel in comparison with the Asura—on this material plane of ours; but in man dwells the Divine—and against the divine force and might, no asuric power can ultimately prevail. The human being who has stood against the Asura has by that very act sided with the gods and received the support and benediction of the Divine. The more we become conscious about the nature of this war and consciously take the side of the progressive force, of the

divine force supporting it, the more will the Asura be driven to retire, his power diminished, his hold relaxed. But if through ignorance and blind passion, through narrow vision and obscurant prejudice we fail to distinguish the right from the wrong side, the dexter from the sinister, surely we shall invite upon mankind utter misery and desolation. It will be nothing less than a betrayal of the Divine Cause.

The fate of India too is being decided in this world-crisis—on the plains of Flanders, on the steppes of Ukraine, on the farthest expanses of the Pacific. The freedom of India will become inevitable and even imminent in proportion as she becomes cognizant of the underlying character and significance of the present struggle, deliberately takes the side of the evolutionary force, works for the gods, in proportion as she grows to be an instrument of the Divine Power. The instrument that the Divine chooses is often, to all appearances, faulty and defective, but since it has this higher and mightier support, it will surely outgrow all its drawbacks and lapses, it will surmount all dangers and obstacles and become unconquerable. This is what the spiritual seeker means by saying that the Divine Grace can make the lame leap across the mountain.

India's destiny today hangs in the balance; it lies in the choice of her path.

A great opportunity is offered to India's soul, a mighty auspicious moment is come, if she can choose. If she chooses rightly, then can she arrive at the perfect fulfilment of her agelong endeavour, her life mission. India has preserved and fostered through the immemorial spiritual living of her saints and seers and sages the invaluable treasure, the vitalising, the immortalising power of spirituality, so that it can be placed at the service of terrestrial life for the deliverance of mankind, for the transfiguration of the human type. It is this for which India lives; by losing this India loses all her reason of existence—*raison d'être*—the earth and humanity too lose all significance. Today we are in the midst of an incomparable ordeal. If we know how to take the final and crucial step, we come out of it triumphant, a new soul and a new body, and we make the path straight for the Lord. We have to recognise clearly and unequivocally that victory on one side will mean that the path of the Divine—of progress and evolution and fulfilment—will remain open, become wider and smoother and safer; but if the victory is on the other side, the path will be closed perhaps for ever, at least for many

ages and even then the travail will have to be undergone again under the most difficult conditions and circumstances. Not with a political shortsightedness, not out of the considerations of convenience or diplomacy, of narrow parochial interests, but with the steady vision of the soul that encompasses the supreme welfare of humanity, we have to make our choice, we have to go over to the right side and oppose the wrong one with all the integrity of our life and being. The Allies, as they have been justly called, are really our allies, our friends and comrades, in spite of their thousand faults and defects; they have stood on the side of the Truth whose manifestation and triumph is our goal. Even though they did not know perhaps in the beginning what they stood for, even though perhaps as yet they do not comprehend the full sense and solemnity of the issues, still they have chosen a side which is ours, and we have to stand by them wholeheartedly in an all-round comradeship if we want to be saved from a great perdition.

This war is a great menace; it is also a great opportunity. It can land humanity into a catastrophe; it can also raise it to levels which would not have been within its reach but for the occasion. The Forces of Darkness have

precipitated themselves with all their might upon the world, but by their very downrush have called upon the higher Forces of Light also to descend. The true use of the opportunity offered to man would be to bring about a change, better still, a reversal, in his consciousness, that is to say, it will be of highest utility if it forces upon him by the pressure of inexorable circumstances—since normally he is so unwilling and incapable to do it through a spontaneous inner awakening—the inescapable decision that he must change and shall change; and the change is to be for or towards the birth of a spiritual consciousness in earthly life. Indeed the war might be viewed as the birth-pangs of such a spiritual consciousness. Whether the labour would be sublimely fruitful here and now or end in barrenness is the question the Fates and the gods are asking of man—the mortal being—today.

THE MESSAGE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

The moralist—the Christian moralist particularly—has dubbed the atomic bomb as the Devil's engine; while the practical politician retorts that the accursed machine has cut short the war, saved more lives on the whole and reduced the extent and duration of suffering and agony. In any case the new weapon is so radical and devastating in its effectiveness that even politicians do not seem to be without a qualm and heart-burning, not in the moral but in the physical and nervous sense. The atom bomb is a bombshell not upon your enemies alone, but it is a boomerang likely to turn back upon yourself, upon the whole of humanity and human civilisation. Archimedes asked for a fulcrum outside the earth to be able to move it out of its orbit; we have found out something with which one hopes and fears one would do much more.

Man's invention of death-dealing weapons has an interesting history. It is, curious to say, the history of his progress and growing civilisation. The primitive man fought with the

strength of his God-given limbs—tooth and nail—to which he subsequently added the crudest of weapons, clubs, of wood or flint. A revolution was brought about when iron was discovered and archery invented. Next revolution came with the appearance of gunpowder on the stage. And then the age of gun-cotton and T.N.T. which held sway till the other day. An interim period of poison gas and chemical warfare was threatened, but everything now has gone overboard with the advent of the atomic bomb and the threatened advent of the Cosmic Death-Ray.

In one sense certainly there has been a progress. This march of machinery, this evolution of tools means man's increasing mastery over Nature, even though physical nature. The primitive man like the animal is a slave, a puppet driven helplessly by Nature's forces. Both lead more or less a life of reflex action: there is here no free, original initiation of action or movement. The slow discovery of Nature's secrets, the gradual application and utilisation of these secrets in actual life meant, first, a liberation of man's conscious being originally imbedded in Nature's inertial movements, and then, a growing power to react upon Nature and mould and change it according to the will

of the conscious being. The result at the outset was a release and organisation on the mental level, in the domain of reason and intelligence. Of course, man found at once that this increasing self-consciousness and self-power meant immense possibilities for good, but, unfortunately, for evil also. And so to guard against the latter contingency, rules and regulations were framed to control and canalise the new-found capacities. The Dharma of the Kshatriya, the honour of the Samurai, the code of Chivalry, all meant that. The power to kill was sought to be checked and restrained by such injunctions as, for example, not to hit below the belt, not to fight a disarmed or less armed opponent and so on. The same principle of morals and manners was maintained and continued through the centuries with necessary changes and modifications in application and finds enshrined today in International Covenants and Conventions.

But a new situation has arisen for some time past. The last Great War (World War No. I) was crucial in many ways in the life of humanity. It opened a new direction of man's growth, opened and then closed also apparently. I am referring to the tragedy of the League of Nations. That was an attempt

on the part of man (and Nature) to lift the inner life and consciousness to the level of the outer achievements. The attempt failed. Man could not rise to the height demanded of him. Now the second World War became logically more devastating and shattering; it has given the go-by to all ethical standards and codes of honour. The poison gas was not used not because of any moral restraint or disinclination, but because of practical and utilitarian considerations. The Atom Bomb, however, has spoken the word.

That word is a warning that unless man changes, becomes master of himself, he cannot be truly master of the world. He cannot command the forces he has unleashed unless he has command over his own nature. The external immensity, the bloated mass that his physical attainments are, unless armoured and animated by an inner growth, will crash by its own weight. The mammoth, the mastodon, the huge pachyderms, in spite of, rather because of their inordinately one-sided growth could not stand the demand of life and perished. Likewise man will not possess the world but the world will engulf and devour him in its aboriginal hunger of unconsciousness, if he does not take a right-about turn and declare

his conversion. The Frankenstein that man has raised can no longer be met by merely human devices—reason and morals—but by a higher discovery and initiation.

The Bomb has shaken the physical atmosphere of the earth as no other engine has done. It has shaken the moral atmosphere too not in a lesser degree. Reason and moral sense could not move man, so Fear has been sent by the Divine Grace. Dante said that God created Hell in his mood of infinite love and justice—that seems to be the inevitable gate through which one has to pass to arrive at the Divine. We are indeed in hell today upon earth, a worse can hardly be tolerated.

Indeed this is the bleak winter of human consciousness—yet can spring be far behind?

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

A leading Nationalist has opined that he does not understand the " slogan " of viewing the nation against a background of internationalism. We can only say that the patriot has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing always like the old guards attached to the old regime who do not see how much water has flown below their feet while they stood gazing at the sky or shut themselves up in their ivory tower. Well, a village headman could in the same way assert that he does not know and cares not to know how to look upon his village against the background of the whole nation: still the village exists only in and through the life of the nation. Even so, the nation which grew out of the fusion of clans and tribes has to outgrow itself; it has to live today, if she wishes to live, in and through the life of humanity as a whole.

Kurukshetra is a turning-point in history. The battle was between an old order that had to go and a new order that was taking birth. The old order was supported, on the one hand, by Bhishma and Drona, personating its codes

and laws, its morals, and, on the other, by Duryodhana and Sisupala as its dynamic actors and executors. The new order was envisaged by Krishna and its chief protagonists were the five brothers. The old order meant the supremacy of the family and the clan: that was the central unit round which society grew and was held together. Krishna came to break that mould and evolve a higher and larger unit of collective life. It was not yet the nation, but an intermediary stage something like a League of clans, (as we in our day are trying another higher stage in the League of Nations). The Rajasuya celebrates the establishment of this New Order of a larger, a greater human organisation, Dharmarajya, as it was called.

We have just passed through another, a far greater, a catastrophic Kuruksherta, the last Act (Shanti Parvam) of which we are negotiating at the present moment. The significance of this cataclysm is clear and evident if we only allow ourselves to be led by the facts and not try to squeeze the facts into the groove of our past prejudices and set notions. All the difficulties that are being encountered on the way to peace and reconstruction arise mainly out of the failure to grasp what Nature has forced upon us. It is as simple as the first

axiom of Euclid: Humanity is one and all nations are free and yet interdependent members of that one and single organism. No nation can hope henceforth to stand in its isolated grandeur—not even America or Russia. Subject or dependent nations too who are struggling to be free will be allowed to work out their freedom and independence, on condition that the same is worked out in furtherance and in collaboration with the ideal of human unity. That ideal has become dynamic and insistent—the more man refuses to accept it, the more he will make confusion worse confounded.

THE RIGHT OF ABSOLUTE FREEDOM

A nation cannot claim the right, even in the name of freedom, to do as it pleases. An individual has not that right, the nation too has not. A nation is a member of humanity, there are other members and there is the common welfare of all. A nation by choosing a particular line of action, in asserting its absolute freedom, may go against other nations, or against the general good. Such freedom has to be curbed and controlled. Collective life—if one does not propose to live the life of the solitary—the animal or the saint—is nothing if not such a system of controls. " The whole of politics is an interference with personal liberty. Law is such an interference ; protection is such an interference ; the rule which makes the will of the majority prevail is such an interference. The right to prevent such use of personal liberty as will injure the interests of the race is the fundamental law of society. From this point of view the nation is only using its primary rights when it restrains the individual from buying or selling foreign goods. " Thus spoke a great Nationalist leader in the days of

Boycott and Swadeshi. What is said here of the individual can be said of the nation too in relation to the greater good of humanity. The ideal of a nation or state supreme all by itself, with rights that none can challenge, inevitably leads to the cult of the Super-state, the Master-race. If such a monster is not to be tolerated, the only way left is to limit the absolute value of nationhood, to view a nation only as a member in a comity of nations forming the humanity at large.

A nation not free, still in bondage, cannot likewise justify its claim to absolute freedom by all or any means, at all times, in all circumstances. There are times and circumstances when even an enslaved nation has to bide its time. Man, in order to assert his freedom and individuality, cannot sign a pact with Mephistopheles; if he does so he must be prepared for the consequences. The same truth holds with regard to the nation. A greater danger may attend a nation than the loss of freedom—the life and soul of humanity itself may be in imminent peril. Such a cataclysmic danger mankind has just passed through or is still passing through. All nations, however circumstanced in the old world, who have stood and fought on the side of humanity, by that very

gesture, have acquired the right,—and the might too,—to gain freedom and greatness and all good things which would not be possible otherwise.

Within the nation all communities must be ready to give and take and settle down amicably. Within humanity too all nations must live the same principle. The days of free competition must be considered as gone for good; instead the rule of collaboration and co-operation has to be adopted (even between past enemies and rivals). In mutual aid and self-limitation lie also the growth and fulfilment of each collective individuality. That is the great Law of Sacrifice enunciated ages ago by Sri Krishna in the Gita—"By increasing each other all will attain the *Summum Bonum*."

FEDERATED HUMANITY

The last great war, out of its bloody welter, threw up a *mantra* for the human consciousness to contemplate and seize and realise: it was *self-determination*. The present world-war has likewise cast up a *mantra* that is complementary. The problem of the unification of the whole human race has engaged the attention of seers and sages, idealists and men of action, since time immemorial; but only recently its demand has become categorically imperative for a solution in the field of practical politics. Viewed from another angle, one can say that it is also a problem Nature has set before herself, has been dealing with through the ages, elaborating and leading to a final issue.

The original unit of the human aggregate is the family; it is like the original cell which lies at the back of the entire system that is called the human body or, for that matter, any organic body. A living and stable nucleus is needed round which a crystallisation and growth can occur. The family furnished such a nucleus in the early epochs of humanity. But with the growth of human life there came

a time when, for a better and more efficient organization in collective life, larger units were needed. The original unit had to be enlarged in order to meet the demands of a wider and more complex growth. Also it is to be noted that the living body is not merely a conglomeration of cells, all more or less equal and autonomous—something like a democratic or an anarchic organization; but it consists of a grouping of such cells in spheres or regions or systems according to differing functions. And as we rise in the scale of evolution the grouping becomes more and more complex, well-defined and hierarchical. Human collectivity also shows a similar development in organization. The original, the primitive unit—the family—was first taken up into a larger unit, the clan; the clan, in its turn, gave place to the tribe and finally the tribe merged into the nation. A similar widening of the unit can also be noticed in man's habitat, in his geographical environment. The primitive man was confined to the village; the village gradually grew into the township and the city state. Then came the regional unit and last of all we arrived at the country.

Until the last great war it seemed that the nation (and country) was the largest living

unit that human collectivity could admit without the risk of a break-up. Now it was at this momentous epoch that the first concept or shape of a larger federation—typified in the League of Nations—stirred into life and began to demand its *lebensraum*. It could not however come to fruition and stability, because the age of isolated nationhood had not yet passed and the principle of self-determination yet needed its absolute justification.

The present war puts the problem in the most acute way. Shall it be still a nation or shall it be a "commonwealth" that must henceforth be the dynamic unit? Today it is evident, it is a fact established by the sheer force of circumstances that isolated, self-sufficient nations are a thing of the past, even like the tribes of the Hebrews or the clans of the Hittites. A super-nation, that is to say, a commonwealth of nations is the larger unit that Nature is in travail to bring forth and establish. That is the inner meaning of the mighty convulsions shaking and tearing humanity today. The empire of the past—an empire of the Roman type and pattern—was indeed in its own way an attempt in the direction of a closely unified larger humanity; but it was a crude and abortive attempt, as Nature's

first attempts mostly are. For the term that was omitted in that greater synthesis was self-determination. Centralisation is certainly the secret of a large organic unity, but not over-centralisation; for this means the submission and sacrifice of all other parts of an organism to the undue demands and interests of only one organ which is considered as the centre, the *metropolis*. Such a system dries up in the end the vitality of the organism: the centre, sucking in all nourishment from the outlying members suffers from oedema and the whole eventually decays and disintegrates. That is the lesson the Roman Empire teaches us.

The autocratic empire is dead and gone: we need not fear its shadow or ghostly regeneration. But the ideal which inspired it in secret and justified its advent and reign is a truth that has still its day. The drive of Nature, of the inner consciousness of humanity was always to find a greater and larger unit for the collective life of mankind. That unit today has to be a federation of free peoples and nations. In the place of nations, several such commonwealths must now form the broad systems of the body politic of human collectivity. That must give the pattern of its texture, the outline of its configuration—the shape of

things to come. Such unit is no longer a hypothetical proposition, a nebula, a matter of dream and imagination. It has become a practical necessity; first of all, because of the virtual impossibility of any single nation, big or small, standing all by itself alone—military and political and economic exigencies demand inescapable collaboration with others, and secondly, because of the still stricter geographical compulsion—the speed and ease of communication has made the globe so small and all its parts so interdependent that none can possibly afford to be exclusive and self-centred.

The organization of this greater and larger unit is the order of the day. It does not seem possible at this stage to go straight to the whole of humanity at large and make of it one single indivisible entity, obliterating all barriers of race and nation. An intermediate step is still necessary even if that remains the final end. Nationhood has been a helper in that direction; it is now a bar. And yet an indiscriminate internationalism cannot meet the situation today, it overshoots the mark. The march of events and circumstances prescribe that nations should combine to form groups or, as they say in French, societies of nations. The combination, however, must be freely

determined, as voluntary partnership in a common labour organisation for common profit and achievement. This problem has to be sloved first, then only can the question of nationalism or other allied knots be unravelled. Nature the Sphinx has set the problem before us and we have to answer it here and now, if humanity is to be saved and welded together into a harmonious whole for a divine purpose.

VANSITTARTISM

Germany is considered now, and naturally with great reason, as the arch criminal among nations. Such megalomania, such lust for wanton cruelty, such wild sadism, such abnormal velleities no people, it is said, have ever evinced anywhere on the face of the earth: the manner and the extent of it all are appalling. Hitler is not the malady; removal of the Fuehrer will not cure Germany. The man is only a sign and a symbol. The whole nation is corrupt to the core: it has been inoculated with a virus that cannot be eradicated. The peculiar German character that confronts and bewilders us now, is not a thing of today or even of yesterday; it has been there since Tacitus remarked it. Even Germans themselves know it very well; the best among them have always repudiated their mother country. Certainly there were peoples and nations that acted at times most barbarously and inhumanly. The classical example of the Spanish Terror in America is there. But all pales into insignificance when compared to the German achievement and ideal in this respect. For here is a people

violent and cruel, not simply because it is their character to be so and they delight in being so, but because it forms the bedrock of their philosophy of life, their *weltanschauung*.

This is the very core of the matter. Germany stands for a philosophy of life, for a definite mode of human values. That philosophy was slowly developed, elaborated by the German mind, in various degrees and in various ways through various thinkers and theorists and moralists and statesmen, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. The conception of the State as propounded even by her great philosophers as something self-existent, sacrosanct and almost divine—august and grim, one has to add—is profoundly significant of the type of the subconscient dynamic in the nation: it strangely reminds one of the state organised by the bee, the ant or the termite. Hitler has only precipitated the idea, given it a concrete, physical and dynamic form. That philosophy in its outlook has been culturally anti-Latin, religiously anti-Christian. Germany cherishes always in her heart the memory of the day when her hero Arminius routed the Roman legions of Varus. Germany stands for a mode of human consciousness that is not in line with the major current of its

evolutionary growth: she harks back to something primeval, infra-rational, infra-human.

Such is the position taken up by Lord Vansittart who has given his name to the new ideology of anti-Germanism. Vansittartism (at least in its extreme variety) has very little hope for the mending of Germany, it practically asks for its ending.

A son of the soil, an eminent erstwhile collaborator of Hitler, who has paid for his apostasy, offered a compromise solution. He says, Germany, as a matter of fact, is not one but two: there is the Eastern Germany (the Northern and the Eastern portion) and there is the Western Germany (the South and the West) and the two are distinct and different—even antagonistic—in temperament and character and outlook. The Western Germany is the true Germany, the Germany of light and culture, the Germany that produced the great musicians, poets and idealists, Goethe and Heine and Wagner and Beethoven. The other Germany represents the dark shadow. It is Prussia and Prussianised Germany. This Germany originally belonged to the bleak, wild, savage, barbarous East Europe and was never thoroughly reclaimed and its union with the Western half was more political than psychological.

So this ex-lieutenant of Hitler proposed to divide and separate the two altogether and form two countries or nations and thus eliminate the evil influence of Prussianism and Junkerism.

The more democratic and liberal elements among the Allies do not also consider that Germany as a whole is smitten with an original sin and is beyond redemption. They say Germany too has men and groups of men who are totally against Hitler and Hitlerism; they may have fallen on evil days, but yet they can be made the nucleus of a new and regenerated Germany. Furthermore, they say if Germany has come to be what she is, considerable portion of the responsibility must be shared by the unprogressive and old-world elements among the Allies themselves who helped or pitied or feared the dark Germany.

Hence it is suggested that for the post-war reconstruction of Germany what is required is the re-education of its people. For, only a psychological change can bring about a durable and radical change. But certain proposals towards this end raise serious misgivings, since they mean iron regimentation under foreign control. Even if such a thing were possible and feasible, it is doubtful if the purpose could be best served in this

way. Measures have to be taken, no doubt, to uproot Prussianism and Junkerism and prevent their revival, no false mercy or sympathy should be extended to the enemies of God and man. But this is only a negative step, and cannot be sufficient by itself. A more positive and more important work lies ahead. The re-education of Germany must come from within, if it is to be permanent and effective. What others can do is to help her in this new orientation. As we have said, there are the progressive elements in Germany too, although submerged for the moment. The task of reconstruction will precisely consist in calling up and organising and marshalling these forces that are for the Light. The Allied organisation, it may be noted, itself has grown up in this way. When one remembers how Britain stood alone at one time against the all-sweeping victorious march of the Titan, how slowly and gradually America was persuaded to join hands, at first in a lukewarm way, finally with all its heart and soul and might and main, how a new France is being built up out of a mass of ruins, we can hope that the same process will be adopted in the work that lies ahead even after victory, with regard to Italy and with regard to Germany. In the second case the task is difficult but it has got to be done.

PART II

THE ROLE OF INDIA

INDIA ONE AND INDIVISIBLE

India is one and indivisible, culturally and spiritually; politically too she must be one and indivisible and is, as a matter of fact, already on the way towards that consummation, in spite of appearances to the contrary. It has got to be so, if India is to be strong and powerful, if her voice is to be heard in the comity of nations, if she is to fulfil her mission in the world.

It is no use laying stress on distinctions and differences : we must, on the contrary, put all emphasis upon the fundamental unity, upon the demand and necessity for a dynamic unity. Naturally there are diverse and even contradictory elements in the make-up of a modern nation. France, for example, was not one, but many to start with and for long. We know of the mortal feud between the Bourguignons and the Armagnacs and the struggle among the Barons generally, some even siding with foreigners against their own countrymen (an Indian parallel we have in the story of Prithwiraj and Jayachand), poor Jeanne d'Arc lamenting over the 'much pity' that was in

sweet France. There were several rival languages—Breton, Gascon, Provençal, besides the French of Isle de France. Apart from these provincial or regional rivalries there were schisms on religious grounds—Huguenots and Catholics, Jansenists and Arians were flying at each other's throat and made of France a veritable bedlam of confusion and chaos. Well, all that was beaten down and smoothed under the steam-roller of a strong centralised invincible spirit of France, one and indivisible and inexorable, that worked itself out through Jeanne d'Arc and Francis the First and Henry the Great and Richelieu and Napoleon. But all nations have the same story. And it is too late now in the day to start explaining the nature and origin of nationhood; it was done long ago by Mazzini and by Renan and once for all.

Indeed, what we see rampant in India today is the mediaeval spirit. This reversion to an older—an extinct, we ought to have been able to say—type of mentality is certainly a fall, a lowering of the collective consciousness. It has got to be remedied and set right. Whatever the motive forces that lie at the back of the movement, motives of fear or despair or class interest or parochial loyalty, motives of

idealism, misguided and obscurantist, they have to be taken by the horns and dominated and eliminated. A breath of modernism, some pure air of clear perception and knowledge and wider consciousness must blow through the congested hectic atmosphere of the Indian body politic.

It will do no good to any one to try to Balkanise India. The Balkan malady is no longer tolerated even in its homeland; it cannot be transported to India in this century and after this Great War. To be and remain free and strong and invincible, India must be and remain indivisible. The strength of the United States of America, of the united Soviets of the Russias, of the British Commonwealth (*pace* Churchill) lies precisely in each one of them being a large unified aggregate, all members pooling their resources together. India cannot maintain her freedom, nor utilise her freedom to its utmost effectivity unless she is one and indivisible. The days of small peoples, of isolated independence are gone—gone for ever even like Thebes and Nineveh, like Kosala of Dasarathi and Mathura of Yadupati.

India can be and is to be a federation of autonomous units. But then we must very

carefully choose or find out the units, those that are real units and not fractions (especially irrational fractions) and at the same time lay as much stress on federation as on autonomy. To choose or create units on the basis of religion or race or caste or creed, that is exactly what we mean by irrationalism, in other words, mediaevalism. The Units must be, on one side, geographical wholes, and, on the other, cultural (or spiritual—not religious) wholes.

THE BASIC UNITY

There is one unity which cannot be denied to India, because Nature has given it and man cannot withdraw or annul it. It is the geographical, the physical unity. It is so clearly and indelibly marked that it has always been looked upon as a definite unit by all outside its boundaries; one may call in question the cultural unity, if one chooses, one may be sceptic about the spiritual unity, but the unity of the body leaps to the eyes, even as the clear contour of a living organism. As we know, however, an individual human frame may contain many personalities, many Jekyls and Hydes may lodge in the same physical tenement, even so, the physical unity that is India may harbour many and diverse independent elements. Admitting even that, the problem does not end there, it is only the beginning. The problem that is set in such a case is, as has been pointed out by the psychologists, the problem of the integration of personality.

A firm physical unity presupposes, at least posits the possibility of an integral unity. Otherwise the body itself would tend to break

up and disintegrate. Such physical cataclysms are not unknown in Nature. However, a geographical unity cannot remain exclusively limited to itself; it brings about other unities by the very pressure, by the capillary action, as it were, of the boundary. The first unity that is called into being is the economic. A *Zollverein* (Customs Union) has almost always been the starting-point of a national union. Next or along with it comes the political unity. India's political and economic unity has been the great work of the British rule, however that rule might be distasteful to us. It is an illustration of Nature's method of compulsion and violence, when man's voluntary effort fails. India possesses a resounding roll of great names who endeavoured to give her this solid political and economic unity; Bharata, Yudhishthira, Asoka, Chandragupta, Akbar, Shivaji have all contributed to the evergrowing unification of Indian polity. But still what they realised was not a stable and permanent thing, it was yet fluent and uncertain; it was only the hammerblow, the plastering, as one would say today, from an outside agency that welded, soldered and fixed that unity.

Fissures of late have opened again and they seem to be increasing in depth and width

and in number. What appeared to be a unified structure, of one piece, whole and entire, now threatens to crash and fall to pieces. We are asked to deny the unity. The political unity, it is said, is an impossibility, the geographical unity an illusion.

In such a predicament the vision of a prophet counts more than the arguments of a political huckster. That an Indian consciousness is there and has grown and taken more and more concrete shape through the ages is a fact to which history bears testimony and honest commonsense pays homage.

THE WAY TO UNITY

Common love, common labour and, above all, as the great French thinker, Ernest Renan,* pointed out, common suffering—that is the cement which welds together the disparate elements of a nation—a nation is not formed otherwise. A nation means peoples differing in race and religion, caste and creed and even language, fused together into a composite but indivisible unit. Not pact nor balancing of interests nor sharing of power and profit can permanently combine and unify conflicting

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* "Dans le passé, un héritage de gloire et de regrets à partager, dans l'avenir un même programme à réaliser; avoir souffert, joui, espéré ensemble, voilà ce qui vaut mieux que des douanes communes et des frontières conformes aux idées stratégiques: voilà ce que l'on comprend malgré les diversités de race et de langue. Je disais tout à l'heure: "avoir souffert ensemble"; oui, la souffrance en commun unit plus que la joie. En fait de souvenirs nationaux, les deuils valent mieux que les triomphes..."

Ernest Renan: "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?"

Translation: "In the past a heritage of glory and regrets to share, in the future the same programme to realise; to have suffered, enjoyed, hoped together, that indeed is better than common customs and strategic frontiers; that is what one understands in spite of diversities of race and language. I said just now: "to have suffered together"; yes, common suffering unites more than common joy. In respect of the memories of a nation griefs are worth more than triumphs..."

Ernest Renan: "What is a nation?"

groups and collectivities. Hindus and Muslims, the two major sections that are at loggerheads today in India, must be given a field, indeed more than one field, where they can work together; they must be made to come in contact with each other, to coalesce and dovetail into each other in as many ways and directions as possible. Instead of keeping them separate in water-tight compartments, in barred cages, as it were, lest they pounce upon each other like wild beasts, it would be wiser to throw them together; let them breathe the same air, live the same life, share the same troubles, the same difficulties, solve the same problems. That is how they will best understand, appreciate and even love each other, become comrades and companions, not rivals and opponents.

To have union, one must unite—division can never lead to unity. Also this unity is established automatically and irrevocably, not by any abstract sense of justice and equality, nor by any romantic or imaginative feeling of fraternity, but by a dynamic *living together*. A common political and civic and economic life creates a field of force that can draw together into a harmonious working the most contrary and refractory elements.

We have said, however, time and again, that the present war is a great opportunity offered by Nature and Providence, opportunity that comes only once in a way; it is precisely the field of which we speak, the field *par excellence*, which can compel all centrifugal elements to come together, labour together, enjoy and suffer together and turn and transmute them into the very strongest centripetal components.

INDEPENDENCE AND ITS SANCTION

Independence is not a gift which one can receive from another, it is a prize that has to be won. In the words of the poet Bhasa, used in respect of empire, we can say also of liberty :

Talloke na tu yācyate na tu punardīnāya dīyate

it is not a thing to be got for the mere asking, nor is it a thing to be made over to a weakling.

The lead Sri Aurobindo gave in this connection has not, sad to say, sufficiently attracted the attention of our people. Indeed what he suggested was exactly, under the circumstances, the best way to acquire the necessary fitness, organised strength, capacity, the might and consequently the right—just the sanction, in other words, that can uphold a demand. We are always ignoring the broad fact that we have not the wherewithal to fight the British, even if it is found necessary to do so for our purpose. A revolution, meaning a chaos and confusion, is not the best means to drive

out the "die-hard Imperialism" as we choose to call it. Nor can cunning or expediency or legal jugglery be of any avail, nor work that is perfunctory, desultory, scampy. The force that can compel a change in the British has got to be of a different character: neither emotional excitement nor anger nor spite nor a philosophical or moral vindication of our cause can be an adequate lever. We declare it is a war: well then, we will have to arm ourselves as in war. That is to say, we must command a strength that is calm, collected, poised, organised—objectively acquired and marshalled, not simply subjectively thought out or taken for granted. That alone can be the imperative sanction to all our claims and demands, our wishes and aspirations.

Precisely, the present war brings to our door the opportunity most suited to the acquisition and development of this power and strength. The very things the Indian temperament once had in abundance but now lacks most and has to recover—discipline, organization, impersonality and objectivity in work, hard and patient labour, skill of execution in minute details—qualities by virtue of which power is not only acquired, but maintained and fostered—are now made more easily available.

These qualities cannot be mastered and developed with such facility and swiftness as under the pressure of the demands of a war. This does not mean that we have got to be militarists. But the world is such that if we wish to live and prosper we must know how to make use of the materials and conditions that are given to us. Many good things are imbedded among bad ones, and wisdom and commonsense do not advise us to throw out the baby with the bath-water. That is another matter, however.

If we had joined hands with the British in the war-work on their own terms—to try to compel them to our terms is to put the cart before the horse—we would have seen that as we proceeded with the work, more and more of it came automatically under our charge, however small or slight it might have looked in the beginning. In the end or very soon we would have found that our possession of the field was an accomplished fact, there could be no question of denying or refusing, the fact had to be accepted—admitted and ratified. It is the well-known policy of the camel which Aesop described in one of his Fables. We have to establish the inexorable logic of events which definitively solves the riddle, cuts the Gordian

knot as it were. A theoretical, that is to say, a moral and legal pact or understanding is but a dam of sands.

Power is best gained and increased in this way, viz., through work, through practical application of it, in its painstaking execution—no matter with what insignificant fund we start with. Let all power come into my hands, let me be legally and verbally recognised as free and invested with plenary power, then alone I can exercise my power, otherwise not—this is the cry of romantic idealism, of sentimental hunger: it has all the impatience and incompetence of visionaries—*illuminés*—it is not the clear and solid wisdom of experience.

We naturally consider the British as our enemy and in order to combat and compel them we have been trying to bring together all the differing elements in our midst. Close up the ranks to fight a common enemy—that is our grand strategy. It is an effort that has not succeeded till now and is not likely to succeed soon. We should have looked a little farther ahead: with a longer view we would have spotted the greater enemy, a vastly greater immediate danger. Against that common enemy a larger and effective unification would have

been quite feasible and even easy. Indeed, if we had taken the other way round, had first united with the British against the greater common enemy, our union with ourselves—our own peoples and parties—would have been automatically accomplished.

That is how we read the situation. When it looked as though there was no way left at our disposal to compose the acute and bitter differences among the multifarious Indian collectivities and also between the Indians and the British or foreigners, precisely at that critical hour appeared the war bringing a unique opportunity, a call and a message, as it were. There is certainly clash in Nature, but always there is an effort also in her to turn that clash into concord. India had too long been the field *par excellence* of discord and it was time that a movement for real harmony should come. Yes, we say, the war was providential to us, a God-send, offering the chance of centuries. But blinded and perverted our human intelligence refused to take it at its worth.

NEW WORLD-CONDITIONS

It is a trite saying that one must change with the changing times. But how many can really do so or know even how to do so? In politics, as in life generally (politics is a part of life, the "precipitated" part, one may say in chemical language), the principle is well-known, though often in a pejorative sense, as policy or tactics. Anyhow the policy pays: for it is one of the main lines, if not the main line of action along which lies success in the practical field. And precisely he who cannot change, who does not see the necessity of change, although conditions and circumstances have changed, is known as the ideologist, the doctrinaire, the fanatic. The no-changer does not change with the times: for, according to him, that is the nature of the weather-cock, the time-server. On the contrary, he seeks to impose his ideas (sometimes called ideals), notions, prejudgments and even prejudices upon time and circumstance. Such an endeavour, on most occasions, can have only a modicum of success; and a blind insistence may even lead to disaster. It may not be difficult to modify some surface movements

of the oceanic surge of life, but to control and command it is quite a different proposition. This, however, is not to say that opportunism, slavery to circumstances should be the order of the day. Not at all. One is not asked to sacrifice the bed-rock truth and principle and run after the fleeting mode, the momentary need, the passing interest, to follow always the comfortable line of least resistance. But one has to distinguish. There are things of local and transient utility and there are things of abiding value brought up by deeper world-currents in the conditions and circumstances that face us. When such great occasions—golden opportunities they are called—come, they come with their own norms, and then it is foolish to force upon them the narrow strait-jacket forms fabricated by our old habits and preconceived notions.

We talk even today of British Imperialism, of the Shylock nature of the white coloniser and exploiter—

> *A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch*
> *Uncapable of pity, void and empty*
> *From any dram of mercy.*

We do not doubt that it is the deliberate policy of these 'vampires' to keep us Indians

down eternally as their serfs and slaves. But whatever be the truth of the fact in the past, it is a pity we do not see that things have changed a good deal and are changing steadily and profoundly and inexorably. It is not, as it is so often demanded, that there has been a change of heart, in the sense that one has become saintly, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing, altruistic. We, on our part, have not become so and it is idle to expect of others to be so. What has happened is a physical change, a change, almost a revolution in the external conditions of life in the world, in the geographical and economic conditions, for example. The geographical revolution is this that all the nations and peoples of the earth have been thrown together to intermingle, have been forced to come into close and inextricable communion with one another: all barriers of distance and physical inaccessibility have been removed and practically eliminated. The universe may be expanding, but the earth has shrunk and has become very small indeed. A signal example of the kind of blunder that one could commit in this respect was that of the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, who said, not knowing what he said, on the eve of the present war, that Czecho-Slovakia was

a far-off foreign country whose fate is of no concern or consequence to the British. Well, Time-Spirit must have had a hearty laughter over the wisdom of the statesman : it did not take long for the British to see that Czecho-Slovakia is dangerously near, indeed, it touches the very frontier of the British Isles. We have flown over the mighty " humps " that separated countries and continents and levelled them and made of the earth one even continuous plain, as it were. Neither the Poles nor the peaks of the Himalayas can hide any longer their millennial secrets from man's newly acquired Argus eye. The span and accuracy of our flying capacity have left no corner of the earth to lie in quiet and splendid isolation.

The geographical revolution has led inevitably to the economic revolution which is not less momentous, pregnant with prophecies of brave new things. We all know that the modern world was ushered in with the industrial revolution. As a result of this new dispensation, world and society gradually divided into two camps : on one side, the industrialists and on the other the agriculturists, or, in a general way, the possessors of raw materials. The Imperialists formed the first group, while the latter, dominated by these, belonged to the

Colonies. The "backward" countries and people who could not take to industry, but continued the old system became a helpless prey to the industrial nations. Africa and Asia and the South American countries came under the domination of European nations, rather the West European Nations: they became the suppliers of raw materials and also the market for finished products. Also within the same country occupying the imperial status, there came a division, a class division, as it is called. A few industrial magnates or trusts (France had its famous Two-Hundred Families) monopolised all the wealth, became the top-dog, the "Haves", the others were mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, serfs and slaves, the "Have-Nots". Exploitation was the motto of the age. The "exploiters" and the "exploited", this trenchant duality was the whole truth of the social scheme and that summed up the entire malady of the collective life. Then came the First World War and the Bolshevic Revolution which brought to a head the great crisis and initiated the change-over to new conditions. The French Revolution called up from the rear of social ranks and set in front the Third Estate and gradually formed and crystallised, with the aid of the Industrial

Revolution, what is known as the Bourgeoisie. The Russian Revolution went a step farther. It dislodged the bourgeoisie and installed the Fourth Estate, the proletariate, as the head and front of society, its centre of power and governmental authority. In the meantime there was developing in the bourgeois society, too, a kind of socialism which aimed at the uplift and remoulding of the working class into a total social power. But the process could not go far enough. The Industrial League, no doubt, began to release some of its monopolies, delegate some of its power and authority to the Proletariate and sought an armistice and *entente*; but still it is they who wielded the real power and gave to society the tone and impress of their characteristic authority. The Russian experiment made a bold departure and attempted to build up a new society from the very bottom: the manual labourers, they who produce with the sweat of their brow and make a society living and prosperous must also be its rulers. Now whatever the success or failure in regard to the perfect ideal, the thing achieved is solid; certain forces have been released that are working inexorably in and through even contrary appearances, they have come to stay and cannot be negatived. The urge, for example,

towards a more equitable distribution of wealth and wealth-producing implements, an even balancing of economic values has been growing and gathering strength : it has become an asset of the body social. Instead of an unfettered competition between rival agencies, the mad drive for a jealous and closely guarded appropriation (rather, mis-appropriation) by private cartels, there has arisen an inevitable need for a unitary or co-operative control under a common direction, whether it be that of the state or some other body equally representing the common interest. In other words, the principle of co-operation has now become a living reality, a thing of practical politics. All effort towards progress and amelioration, cure of social ills and regaining of health and strength must lie in that direction : anything going the contrary way shall perforce be out of tune with the Time-Spirit and can cause only confusion, bring in stagnation or even regression.

First of all, the colonies, which mean practically the Eastern hemisphere, can no longer be regarded, even by those who would very much wish to, as the field of exploitation, the granary of raw materials or the dumping ground of finished articles. Industrialism, the spirit and urge of it at least, has reached these places

too: the exploiters themselves have been instrumental in bringing it about. The growing industrialism in countries so long held in subjection or tutelage, as safe preserves, need not necessarily mean a further spell of keen competition. If we look closely, we see things moving in a different direction. It is self-evident that all countries do not and cannot grow or manufacture all things with equal ease and facility. Countries are naturally complementary or supplementary to each other with regard to their raw produce or industrial manufacture. And an inevitable give and take, mutual understanding and help must follow such an alignment of economic forces.

It must also be noted that all countries need not and cannot have the same pattern of economic life, even that of a successful economic life. A vast country like India, with the manifold resources of a whole continent, can at once be industrial and agricultural—modern America, to some extent, is an example of this type. She can follow both the lines of economic development with equal vigour and success. And in the midst of an intensive and extensive agricultural and industrial occupation, there may be still room for the age-long, old-world cottage industry, for the individual

artisan or craftsman whose God-given hand may always give to things an added value beyond the reach of the mere machine.

With this perspective in view, keeping always in front the probable shape of things to come, one must learn to consider the present, look for those forces that make for the new world and thus help the course of evolution and progress. Nature does not care for her past formations, she is not bound to them; she is always throwing up chances and opportunities—variations—for new developments. Nature red in tooth and claw is only one side of the shield; and the picture is not as true today as it was even a few hundred years ago, in spite of the spells of devastating carnage she still allows in her surface movements. It may be that the very pressure and insistence of an inner harmony has brought to the fore, made acute difficulties and contraries that have to be met and solved for good.

International co-operation has become a thing of immediate necessity, of practical utility. We met in San Francisco, not out of the spirit of sheer idealism or altruism but because we were forced to it. Circumstances have come to such a pass that even local needs, natural aspirations can be best met and served in and

through international understanding. It is the solution of international problems, the amelioration of international relations first that would more easily lead to the solution of national problems than the other way round, which was perhaps the normal direction of the world-forces even a decade or two ago. Such world-organisations as the UNRRA or even the Red Cross, although they do not go deep enough into the root problems and are not powerful enough to mould or control world-forces, appearing more or less as charitable institutions, are still concrete expressions of an urgent immediate demand for mutuality and solidarity among the nations, even between warring nations.

The relation between India and Britain is peculiar and has an especial significance. It is not enough to say that Britain is the imperialist overlord and India the subject underling. The two stand for two world-forces and their relation is symbolic. The difficulty that will be solved between them will be a world-difficulty solved; what they achieve in common will be a world-achievement. India means nations in bondage aspiring to be free, peoples living in conditions of want and weakness and internecine quarrel, still struggling towards a

harmonious and prosperous organised life; she is the cry of the down-trodden demanding her share of earth's air and light—life-room. Britain represents the other side, the free people, organised, strong and successful. Neither America nor Russia fills this role. America is young; she has a wonderful grasp over life's externals; none can compare or compete with her in the ordering and marshalling of an efficient pattern of life, but what escapes her is the more abiding and deeper truth of life and living. Russia started to create on totally new foundations, indeed the outer aspect here has changed very much. But the forces that ruled Russia's past do not seem to have changed to the same extent. In spite of the rise of the proletariate, in spite of all local autonomies, it is doubtful if the true breath of freedom is blowing over the country, if the country is creating out of a deeper soul-vision. Life movement in either of these two countries seems to have a rigid mould; that is because they seek to build or reform, that is to say, fabricate life, in other words, they impose upon life a pattern conceived by notions and prejudgments, even perhaps idiosyncracies. The British are more amenable to change, precisely because they do not force a change and do not know they are changing.

The British Empire is more loosely formed, its units have more freedom than is the case with other Empires built upon the pattern of the extremely centralised Roman Empire. Truly it has the spirit of a commonwealth. The spirit of decentralisation and federation that is increasing today and has seized even old-world Empires—the Dutch, the French, the Russian —has come largely from the British example. Therefore, the unravelling of the Britain and India tangle would mean the solution of a world-problem. These two countries have been put together precisely because the solution is possible here and an ideal solution for all others to profit by.

The British people do not move by ideals and idealism, as the French do, for example. The French rise naturally in revolt and rebellion and revolution for the sake of an idea—the motto of the Great Revolution was "Liberty or Death". Without an upsetting they cannot bring about a change; for the social moulds are rigid and more presistent. The Anglo-Saxons, on the contrary, go by an unfailing instinct, as it were, gradually and slowly, but surely and inevitably— " from precedent to precedent", as they themselves say. A life-intuition guides them: the inherent merit of an

ideal has not such a great value in their eye, but if the ideal means a practical utility, a thing demanded by time and circumstances, a clear issue out of a dead impasse, well, they hesitate no longer and go about it in right earnest as practical men of affairs.

Now, there can be no doubt that the British wish, are even eager, to have a settlement with India: they wish to have an India free and united and strong and they are willing to lend their help as far as lies in their power and competence,—not because it is an ideal, something good in the abstract and therefore worth pursuing and they are altruistic or philanthropic by nature, but because it is a matter of self-interest to them, it is a thing to be done because of the actual life conditions. A strong free and friendly India is an asset they wish to build and conserve. They feel that the old-world methods of one-sided exploitation is neither possible nor desirable any longer; they must move with the moving times. And, as I have already said, they do not move principally by ideas and notions and brain formations, they are in closer touch with life forces and are more easily responsive to these.

True, there are contrary voices. But as one swallow does not make a summer, even so, many

such voices cannot perpetuate the past. The name, even the form of Imperialism is there, but the substance of it is how much changed, if one goes behind! The British Empire, as it stands today, is composed of three strands, we may say: the first, the front line, consists of Canada and Australia, the second, of Ireland, Egypt and Irak, and the third, mainly of India. This graded pattern shows that it is something fluid and even progressive, there is nothing rigid and final about it. The very nature of the composition seems to exert a pressure working for an equality, an equilibrium of partnership building up a genuine Commonwealth. The model is catching. An Imperialistic Russia, that has found a new *avatar* in Stalin, has become a champion of federalism, as the best way of preserving the imperial integrity!

India should consider the present situation with calmness, detachment and wisdom, not hark back to the past, brooding over the mistakes and misdeeds of her erstwhile masters —they are no longer masters; yes, forgiving and forgetting, one must face squarely the new situation and make the best use of it. India, that claims a spiritual heritage and a high and hoary civilisation, can afford to be idealistic even and envisage a deeper and higher law of

Nature, of universal harmony and solidarity, of conscious co-operation. Apart from that, if as practical men, we look to our self-interest, then also it will be wise for us to take up the same line of procedure, *viz.*, what idealism demands. A nation too, like the individual, can be swayed by pride, prejudice, passion, a false sense of prestige and a spirit of vengeance. However natural these reactions may seem to be, in view of the conditions of their incidence, they possess, more often than not, the property of the boomerang, they hit back the originating source itself. It has been said, for example, that the origin of the present war — the rise of Hitler—is due to the Versailles Treaty that ended the last war, which was, in its turn a war of *revenge* having its origin on the field of Sedan; this campaign of 1870 again was the natural and inevitable outcome of the Napoleonic conquest. Thus there has been a seesaw movement in national relations without a difinite issue. And pessimists of today aver that we are not come to the end of the spiral.

But we do not subscribe to such prognostics. There is no inevitability of the kind. "Time must have a stop." The two lower limbs of the dialectic must be rounded in then by a higher reality. For two reasons. First of

all, Nature herself moves towards synthesis and harmony—discord and difference are part only of the process working for that eventual consummation. Secondly, the human spirit is there, with the urge of its inevitable destiny, to create its power in the vision and consciousness of the hidden truth and reality which surface contingencies seem often to deny.

Let India's freedom mean precisely this higher synthesis so much needed and so long expected in the life of humanity.

THE BASIS OF UNITY

I

A modern society or people cannot have religion, that is to say, credal religion, as the basis of its organized collective life. It was mediaeval society and people that were organized on that line. Indeed mediaevalism means nothing more—and nothing less—than that. But whatever the need and justification in the past, the principle is an anachronism under modern conditions. It was needed, perhaps, to keep alive a truth which goes into the very roots of human life and its deepest aspiration; and it was needed also for a dynamic application of that truth on a larger scale and in smaller details, on the mass of mankind and in its day to day life. That was the aim of the Church Militant and the Khilafat; that was the spirit, although in a more Sattwic way, behind the Buddhistic evangelism or even Hindu colonization.

The truth behind a credal religion is the aspiration towards the realization of the Divine, some ultimate reality that gives a permanent

meaning and value to the human life, to the existence lodged in this 'sphere of sorrow' here below. Credal paraphernalia were necessary to express or buttress this core of spiritual truth when mankind, in the mass, had not attained a certain level of enlightenment in the mind and a certain degree of development in its life-relations. The modern age is modern precisely because it had attained to a necessary extent this mental enlightenment and this life development. So the scheme or scaffolding that was required in the past is no longer unavoidable and can have either no reality at all or only a modified utility.

A modern people is a composite entity, especially with regard to its religious affiliation. Not religion, but culture is the basis of modern collective life, national or social. Culture includes in its grain that fineness of temperament which appreciates all truths behind all forms, even when there is a personal allegiance to one particular form.

In India, it is well known, the diversity of affiliations is colossal, *sui generis*. Two major affiliations have today almost cut the country into two; and desperate remedies are suggested which are worse than the malady itself, as they may kill the patient outright. If it is so,

it is, I repeat, the mediaeval spirit that is at the bottom of the trouble.

The rise of this spirit in modern times and conditions is a phenomenon that has to be explained and faced: it is a ghost that has come out of the past and has got to be laid and laid for good. First of all, it is a reaction from modernism: it is a reaction from the modernist denial of certain fundamental and eternal truths, of God, soul, and immortality: it is a reaction from the modernist affirmation of the mere economic man. And it is also a defensive gesture of a particular complex of consciousness that has grown and lives powerfully and now apprehends expurgation and elimination.

In Europe such a contingency did not arise, because the religious spirit, rampant in the days of Inquisitions and St. Bartholomews, died away: it died, and (or, because) it was replaced by a spirit that was felt as being equally, if not more, authentic and, which for the moment, suffused the whole consciousness with a large and high afflatus, commensurate with the amplitude of man's aspiration. I refer, of course, to the spirit of the Renaissance. It was a spirit profane and secular, no doubt, but on that level it brought a catholicity of temper and a richness in varied interest—a

humanistic culture, as it is called—which constituted a living and unifying ideal for Europe. That spirit culminated in the great French Revolution which was the final *coup de grace* to all that still remained of mediaevalism, even in its outer structure, political and economical.

In India the spirit of renascence came very late, late almost by three centuries; and even then it could not flood the whole of the continent in all its nooks and corners, psychological and physical. There were any number of pockets (to use a current military phrase) left behind which guarded the spirit of the past and offered persistent and obdurate resistance. Perhaps, such a dispensation was needed in India and inevitable also; inevitable, because the religious spirit is closest to India's soul and is its most direct expression and cannot be uprooted so easily; needed, because India's and the world's future demands it and depends upon it.

Only, the religious spirit has to be bathed and purified and enlightened by the spirit of the renascence: that is to say, one must learn and understand and realize that Spirit is the thing—the one thing needful—*Tamevaikam jānatha*; 'religions' are its names and forms,

appliances and decorations. Let us have by all means the religious spirit, the fundamental experience that is the inmost truth of all religions, that is the matter of our soul; but in our mind and life and body let there be a luminous catholicity, let these organs and instruments be trained to see and compare and appreciate the variety, the numberless facets which the one Spirit naturally presents to the human consciousness. *Ekam sat viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti.* It is an ancient truth that man discovered even in his earliest seekings; but it still awaits an adequate expression and application in life.

II

India's historical development is marked by a special characteristic which is at once the expression of her inmost nature and the setting of a problem which she has to solve for herself and for the whole human race. I have spoken of the diversity and divergence of affiliations in a modern social unit. But what distinguishes India from all other peoples is that the diversity and divergence have culminated here in contradictoriness and mutual exclusion.

The first extremes that met in India and fought and gradually coalesced to form a single

cultural and social whole were, as is well known, the Aryan and the non-Aryan. Indeed, the geologists tell us, the land itself is divided into two parts structurally quite different and distinct, the Deccan plateau and the Himalayan ranges with the Indo-Gangetic plain: the former is formed out of the most ancient and stable and, on the whole, horizontally bedded rocks of the earth, while the latter is of comparatively recent origin, formed out of a more flexible and weaker belt (the Himalayan region consisting of a colossal flexing and crumpling of strata). The disparity is so much that a certain group of geologists hold that the Deccan plateau did not at all form part of the Asiatic continent, but had drifted and dashed into it: in fact the Himalayas are the result of this mighty impact. The usual division of an Aryan and a Dravidian race may be due to a memory of the clash of the two continents and their races.

However, coming to historical times, we see wave after wave of the most heterogeneous and disparate elements—Sakas and Huns and Greeks, each bringing its quota of exotic material—enter into the oceanic Indian life and culture, lose their separate foreign identity and become part and parcel of the common whole.

Even so,—a single unitary body was formed out of such varied and shifting materials—not in the political, but in a socio-religious sense. For a catholic religious spirit, not being solely doctrinal and personal, admitted and embraced in its supple and wide texture almost an infinite variety of approaches to the Divine, of forms and norms of apprehending the Beyond. It has been called Hinduism : it is a vast synthesis of mutiple affiliations. It expresses the characteristic genius of India and hence Hinduism and Indianism came to be looked upon as synonymous terms. And the same could be defined also as Vedic religion and culture, for its invariable basis—the bed-rock on which it stood firm and erect—was the Vedas, the Knowledge seen by the sages. But there had already risen a voice of dissidence and discord—that of Buddha, not so much, perhaps, of Buddha as of Buddhism. The Buddhistic enlightenment and discipline did not admit the supreme authority of the Vedas; it sought other bases of truth and reality. It was a great denial; and it meant and worked for a vital schism. The denial of the Vedas by itself, perhaps, would not be serious, but it became so, as it was symptomatic of a deeper divergence. Denying the Vedas, the Buddhistic spirit denied

life. It was quite a new thing in the Indian consciousness and spiritual discipline. And it left such a stamp there that even today it stands as the dominant character of the Indian outlook. However, India's synthetic genius rose to the occasion and knew how to bridge the chasm, close up the fissure, and present again a body whole and entire. Buddha became one of the Avataras : the discipline of Nirvana and Maya was reserved as the last duty to be performed at the end of life, as the culmination of a full-length span of action and achievement; the way to Moksha lay through Dharma and Artha and Kama, Sannyasa had to be built upon Brahmacharya and Garhasthya. The integral ideal was epitomized by Kalidasa in his famous lines about the character of the Raghus :

> They devoted themselves to study in their boyhood, in youth they pursued the objects of life; when old they took to spiritual austerities, and in the end they died united with the higher consciousness.

Only this process of integration was not done in a day, it took some centuries and had to pass through some unpleasant intermediary stages.

And still this was not the last—it could not be the last—antithesis that had to be

synthetized. The dialectical movement led to a more serious and fiercer contradiction. The Buddhistic schism was after all a division brought about from within: it could be said that the two terms of the antinomy belonged to the same genus and were commensurable. The idea or experience of Asat and Maya was not unknown to the Upanishads, only it had not there the exclusive stress which the later developments gave it. Hence quite a different, an altogether foreign body was imported into what was or had come to be a homogeneous entity, and in a considerable mass. Unlike the previous irruptions that merged and were lost in the general life and consciousness, Islam entered as a leaven that maintained its integrity and revolutionized Indian life and culture by infusing into its tone a Semitic accent. After the Islamic impact India could not be what she was before—a change became inevitable even in the major note. It was a psychological cataclysm almost on a par with the geological one that formed her body; but the spirit behind which created the body was working automatically, inexorably towards the greater and more difficult synthesis demanded by the situation. Only the thing is to be done now consciously, not through an unconscious

process of *laissez-faire* as on the inferior stages of evolution in the past. And that is the true genesis of the present conflict.

History abounds in instances of racial and cultural immixture. Indeed, all major human groupings of today are invariably composite formations. Excepting, perhaps, some primitive aboriginal tribes there are no pure races existent. The Briton, the Dane, the Anglo-Saxon, and the Norman have combined to form the British; a Frenchman has a Gaul, a Roman, a Frank in him; and a Spaniard's blood would show an Iberian, a Latin, a Gothic, a Moorish element in it. And much more than a people, a culture in modern times has been a veritable cockpit of multifarious and even incongruous elements. There are instances also in which a perfect fusion could not be accomplished, and one element had to be rejected or crushed out. The complete disappearance of the Aztecs and Mayas in South America, the decadence of the Red Indians in North America, of the Negroes in Africa as a result of a fierce clash with European peoples and European culture illustrate the point.

Nature, on the whole, has solved the problem of blood fusion and mental fusion of

different peoples, although on a smaller scale. India today presents the problem on a larger scale and on a higher or deeper level. The demand is for a spiritual fusion and unity. Strange to say, although the Spirit is the true bed-rock of unity—since, at bottom, it means identity—it is on this plane that mankind has not yet been able to really meet and coalesce. India's genius has been precisely working in the line of a perfect solution of this supreme problem.

Islam comes with a full-fledged spiritual soul and a mental and vital formation commensurable with that inner being and consciousness. It comes with a dynamic spirit, a warrior mood, that aims at conquering the physical world for the Lord, a temperament which Indian spirituality had not, or had lost long before, if she had anything of it. This was, perhaps, what Vivekananda meant when he spoke graphically of a Hindu soul with a Muslim body. The Islamic dispensation, however, brings with it not only something complementary, but also something contradictory, if not for anything else, at least for the strong individuality which does not easily yield to assimilation. Still, in spite of great odds, the process of assimilation was going on slowly and surely.

But of late it appears to have come to a dead halt; difficulties have been presented which seem insuperable.

If religious toleration were enough, if that made up man's highest and largest achievement, then Nature need not have attempted to go beyond cultural fusion; a liberal culture is the surest basis for a catholic religious spirit. But such a spirit of toleration and catholicity, although it bespeaks a widened consciousness, does not always enshrine a profundity of being. Nobody is more tolerant and catholic than a dilettante, but an ardent spiritual soul is different.

To be loyal to one's line of self-fulfilment, to follow one's self-law, *swadharma*, wholly and absolutely—without this no spiritual life is possible—and yet not to come into clash with other lines and loyalties, nay more, to be in positive harmony with them, is a problem which has not been really solved. It was solved, perhaps, in the consciousness of a Ramakrishna, a few individuals here and there, but it has always remained a source of conflict and disharmony in the general mind even in the field of spirituality. The clash of spiritual or religious loyalties has taken such an acute form in India today, they have been carried

to the bitter extreme, in order, we venture to say, that the final synthesis might be absolute and irrevocable. This is India's mission to work out, and this is the lesson which she brings to the world.

The solution can come, first, by going to the true religion of the Spirit, by being truly spiritual and not merely religious, for, as we have said, real unity lies only in and through the Spirit, since Spirit is one and indivisible; secondly, by bringing down something—a great part, indeed, if not the whole—of this puissant and marvellous Spirit into our life of emotions and sensations and activities.

If it is said that this is an ideal for the few only, not for the mass, our answer to that is the answer of the Gita—*Yad yad acharati sreshthah.* Let the few then practise and achieve the ideal: the mass will have to follow as far as it is possible and necessary. It is the very character of the evolutionary system of Nature, as expressed in the principle of symbiosis, that any considerable change in one place (in one species) is accompanied by a corresponding change in the same direction in other contiguous places (in other associated species) in order that the poise and balance of the system may be maintained.

It is precisely strong nuclei that are needed (even, perhaps, one strong nucleus is sufficient) where the single and integrated spiritual consciousness is an accomplished and established fact: that acts inevitably as a solvent drawing in and assimilating or transforming and re-creating as much of the surroundings as its own degree and nature of achievement inevitably demand.

India did not and could not stop at mere cultural fusion—which was a supreme gift of the Moguls. She did not and could not stop at another momentous cultural fusion brought about by the European impact. She aimed at something more. Nature demanded of her that she should discover a greater secret of human unity and through progressive experiments apply and establish it in fact. Christianity did not raise this problem of the greater synthesis, for the Christian peoples were more culture-minded than religious-minded. It was left for an Asiatic people to set the problem and for India to work out the solution.

PART III

TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY

THE IDEALS OF HUMAN UNITY

The unification of humanity is also a thing decreed. For it is the goal towards which Nature is proceeding slowly but inevitably, bringing into play factors and forces that work out that consummation.

Man is a gregarious animal, a social being. He forms groups and collectivities and lives as a member among others with whom he is related and connected in various ways. These groupings are the units round which man's life crystallises and develops, the nuclei of a growing, an increasingly complex and unified organism.

The earliest and the most persistent unit is the family: it may be called the atomic unit of the social body, ultimate and unbreakable, considered as such at least till now. Larger units were formed in course of time or simultaneously out of this original unit. Clan, tribe are extensions of the family. For the movement of extension, of continual enlargement is natural to a living organism, and the urge of the social life in man, his gregarious instinct, his sense of solidarity with his kind is so strong and irrepressible that he cannot rest content

with the family alone, but extend its boundaries or make new adhesions to it for the formation of a still larger and more composite unit. The village was such a unit in the early days. It was a collective organization on a territorial basis : originally, however, the village too seems to have been if not wholly, at least in its major portion, an extended family. It gradually grew into a heterogeneous body, yet strongly unified, not consisting merely of blood-relations but others needed for the social economy.

Various other regional and parochial units also developed : baronies, kingdoms and princedoms, city states, all seeking to further extend and enrich the denotation of the social unit. A critical stage was reached when, out of the welter of all these various types of social unities, yet another type, of momentous consequences, emerged, called the nation. The nation absorbed all other lesser unities and soon grew into an extremely composite and yet living unity : its strong cohesiveness, in spite of a diversity of the component elements, no less than its ardent aggressiveness, is a remarkable characteristic attending the phenomenon. It looks as though—at least it looked so till the other day—all the other previous attempts at a larger unity, since the formation of the original

family unit, had one purpose in view, viz., the bringing forth of the national unit. Next to the family, the nation seems to be the stable unit, the other intervening ones were unstable comparatively and had only a temporary and contributory function.

Nationhood, however, developed into such a firm, solid, self-conscious and selfishly aggressive entity that it has now become almost a barrier to a further enlargement of the unit towards a still greater and wider unification of mankind. But nature cannot be baulked, its straight urge hampered; it takes to by-ways and indirect routes and roundabout channels for its fulfilment. On three different lines a greater and larger unification of mankind has been attempted that goes beyond the unification brought about by the ideal of the country or people or nation. First, the political, that leads to the formation of Empires. But the faults and errors in this type of larger unit have been made very evident. It acts as a steam-roller, no doubt, crushing out and levelling parochial differences and local narrownesses; but it also means the overgrowth of a central organism—called the metropolis—at the expense of other member organisms forming part of the larger collectivity, viz., colonies and dependencies

and subject races, which must in the end bring about a collapse and disruption of the whole structure. The Roman Empire was the typical example of this experiment. Next, there was what can be called the racial line. Many attempts have been made in this direction, but nothing very successful has taken shape. Pan-Slavism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Jewry are some of the expressions of this movement. It has the fatal fault of a basis that is uncertain and doubtful: for a pure race is a myth and in modern conditions the cry must necessarily be a cry in the wilderness. Many races and peoples have in the course of human history been thrown together, they have to live together, are compelled to lead a common social, political, economic and cultural life. That indeed was the genesis of nationhood. The hegemony of a so-called Nordic race over the world was one of the monsters produced by this attempt, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle.

The third is the religious principle. Religion, that is to say, institutional religion has also sought to unify mankind on a larger basis, as large indeed as the world itself. The aim of Christendom, of Islam was frankly a conquest of the whole human race for the one jealous Lord. Buddhism and Hinduism did not

overtly or with a set purpose attempt any such world-wide proselytism, but their influence and actual working had almost a similar effect : at least in the case of the former, it was like a flood throwing down many local boundaries, overflooding distant countries, and peoples, giving them all one unified religious life and culture. But here too we meet the same objectionable feature as there is in the attempt at unity through the racial principle. For religious imperialism cannot succeed in unifying humanity, as amply demonstrated by the Roman Catholic Church ; and like political imperialism it was more or less an experiment in the line, effecting nothing beyond a moral atmosphere. Even a federation of religions, contemplated by some idealists, seems hardly a practicable proposition ; for it is only a mental conception and has no compelling vital force in it. At best it is only a sign-post, a pointer to the goal Nature and humanity have been endeavouring to evolve and realise.

A new type of imperialism—for imperialism it is in essence—has been developing in recent times ; and it seems it shall have its day and contribute its share of experimentation towards the goal we are speaking of. I am of course referring to what has been frankly

and aptly termed as the *Dictatorship of the Proletariate*. It is an attempt to cut across all other boundaries and unities of human groupings—racial, national, religious, even familial. It seeks to unify and consolidate one whole stratum of humanity in a single stream-lined steel-frame organisation. At least that was the ideal till yesterday; there seems to be growing here too a movement towards decentralisation. Naturally, even as an organisation that is top-heavy is bound to topple down in the end, likewise an organisation that is *bottom-heavy*, that is to say, restricts to that portion only of its body all sap and dynamism, is also bound to deteriorate and disintegrate. A tree does not live by its branches and leaves and flowers alone, no doubt, nor does it live by its roots alone.

A different type of wider grouping is also being experimented upon nowadays, a federal grouping of national units. The nation is taken in this system as the stable indivisible fundamental unit, and what is attempted is a free association of independent nations that choose to be linked together because of identity of interests or mutual sympathy in respect of ideal and culture. The British Empire is a remarkable experiment on this line: it is extremely interesting to see how an old-world Empire is

really being liquidated (in spite of a Churchill) and transformed into a commonwealth of free and equal nations. America too has been attempting a Pan-American federation. And in continental Europe, a Western and an Eastern Block of nations seem to be developing, not on ideal lines perhaps at present because of their being based upon the old faulty principle of balance of power hiding behind it a dangerously egoistic and exclusive national consciousness; but that may change when it is seen and experienced that the procedure does not pay, and a more natural and healthier approach may be adopted.

Now out of this complex of forces and ideals, what seems to stand out clearly is this: (i) the family unit remains for practical purposes,—whatever breaking or modification affects its outward forms, the thing seems to be a permanent feature of life organization; (ii) the nation too has attained a firm stability and inviolability; it refuses to be broken or dissolved and in any larger aggregate that is formed this one has to be integrated intact as a living unit. The other types of aggregates seem to be more in the nature of experiments and temporary necessities; when they have served their purpose they fade and disappear or are thrown

into the background and persist as vestigial remains. It seems to us that the clan, the tribe, the race are such formations. Regionalism, Imperialism (political, economic or religious) are also not stable aggregates.

Still it is difficult to say as yet what would be the exact form of the intermediate grouping between the nation and humanity at large, even if a grouping of nations appear to be a necessity as an intermediate stage, whether such groupings or commonwealths are going to be a permanent feature or whether the nation will finally remain the ultimate unit and humanity will consist of such free equal nations, independent units, all together forming a unified whole.

Anarchism—a certain school of philosophical or spiritual anarchism—presages, however, an agglutinative type of humanity. That is to say, there will be no hierarchy of groupings, in fact there will be no aggregates at all, the individual will be the sole, the first and the last unit. The individual, it is said, will have so developed and perfected its self-nature that by following the law of that nature, it will automatically and spontaneously live and move harmoniously with all the rest; each will be a self-contained unit and there will be

a kind of pre-established harmony among all. Even if it be so, however, a hierarchical form of groupings in human organisation need not necessarily be barred out.

ON SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

I

It is one of the great errors of the human mind to take equality as identical with uniformity. When Rousseau started the revolutionary slogan "Men are born equal", men were carried away in the vehemence of the new spirit and thought that there was absolutely no difference between man and man, all difference must be due to injustice, tyranny and corruption in the social system. Rousseau's was a necessary protest and corrective against the rank inequality that was the order of the day. All men are, however, equal not in the sense that all material particles—sea-sands or molecules or atoms, for example—may be equal, that is to say, same in dimension and mass and energy. That is the materialistic mechanistic view, imposed by the first discoveries and conclusions of modern Science, but which has lost much of its cogency in recent times even in respect of the physical world.

All men are equal, not in the sense that all have the same uniform value, but that each has his own value. It is the recognition of the personal worth of each individual that gives him true equality with others and not the casting of all into the same mould and pattern, fitting all on to the Procrustean bed, which indeed would mean just the negation of equality. This variability is the very basis of a living equality. Physically all men have not the same height or weight or growth, even so internally too all have not the same magnitude of being or similar power of consciousness.

A social organization must have two fundamental objects. The central purpose is to serve and help the individual. That is the first thing to be remembered. Organization for the sake of organization is not the end. Organization for the sake of perpetuating a system, however laudable it may be, is not the end either. It is, as I say, by the service that an organization renders to its individual members, and not merely by its mechanical order and efficiency that it is to be judged. This service, I have said, is twofold. First, each individual must find his proper vocation : the right man in the right place. The function of each man must be in accordance with his nature and character. Secondly, each

person, while fulfilling his Dharma, (that is the right word) must be trained, must have the opportunity to grow and increase in his being and consciousness. First of all, a prosperous, at least an adequately equipped outer life, and then as adequate a *lebensraum* for the inner personality to have its free and full play and expression.

A totalitarian equality takes men as blocks or chunks of wood and also cuts and clips them as such whenever and wherever needed, thrusts them indiscriminately into any nook and corner of the social framework for the sake of its upkeep and maintenance. It is something that is characteristic of a modern army—thoroughly mechanised—in which men are not different from the nuts and bolts of a machine, all forming a stream-lined massive unity, where persons and individuals as such have no value or consideration, they are dumb and almost dead materials and when worn out just simply to be replaced by others. If it is to be compared to any living thing, we can think of only the regimentation that obtains in an ant-hill or a bee-hive.

Mechanical and totalitarian equality does injustice, to say the least, to the individual, for it does not take into account the variable value and the particularity of each individual. It usually gives him a position and function in

the society to which his inner nature and character do not at all respond. The result of such indifference to individuality is evident also in a modern society based as it is on so-called freedom, that is to say, on open competition and struggle. The tragedy of a Bankim eking out his subsistence as a bureaucratic official is not a rare spectacle but the very rule of the social system in vogue. Indeed the so-called steel-frame of governmental organization of our days sucks in all the best brains and few can survive this process of "evisceration, deprivation, destitution, desiccation and evacuation", to use the glowing and graphic words of T. S. Eliot, although in another connection; few can maintain or express after passing through this grinding or sucking machine their inner reality, the truth and beauty personal to them. The poet regrets

> Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire—

but why, why is it so ? Because

> Chill penury repress'd their noble rage
> And froze the genial current of the soul.

The chill penury was nothing else than the uncongenial atmosphere which did not favour

the growth of the soul, allow it to follow its own line of development and fulfilment.

At times a remedy was tried: the social pattern was sought to be constructed upon the principle of "Career open to talents"; this was a motto which the great Napoleon endeavoured to carry out in practice. Instead of claims of birth, age or position, he looked for real merit as the "Open Sesame" to the highest ranks involving the gravest duties and responsibilities. Even he, however, could not preserve or carry out fully his good intentions. The Imperator (the First Consul) tried the experiment, but the Emperor already slipped off from the ideal.

But to tell the truth, this remedy, even if successful, is not enough. Something radical is needed. Indeed, it is because the radical cure is not sought and attempted that the disease continues or reappears even if held in abeyance for a time.

We have said individual or personal worth should be the chief concern of the social governance, to bring it to birth, to maintain and foster it is its principal function. This means naturally freedom, but not the freedom that is demanded by the individualist as against the socialist or the collectivist. For there freedom means freedom for competition and

rivalry, freedom for the egos, for selfish interests to fight and battle and survive who can. That is the motto of the competitive society in which we have been living for some time past. That system has become intolerable and hence all the seismic troubles in society today. What is needed is real freedom. For it is easy to see that under the competitive system the apparent freedom is only apparent, a make-believe. It is not freedom, that is to say, free choice and initiation that can work here, it is the pressure from rivals, the impact of adverse circumstances that determine one's will and choice. In the second place, it is not the deeper urges or capacities that are touched and awakened in this way, it is the superficial impulses and preoccupations that find a vent. Man is here only a link in a chain of reactions over which he has hardly any real control: one's decision is limited by conditions beyond one's reach, one's hands are forced, as the common phrase goes.

The problem then is this: how to arrive at the inner freedom, how to contact the inner man, the true person and personality? For we are aiming at nothing less than the Soul, the Self, the Divine in man, God's purpose in the Individual, the Individual as God's instrument.

That is the *beau idéal*, so to say, in the human personality which all schemes of social reconstruction must have constantly in view.

The question now is to devise ways and means of materialising this ideal. Circumstanced as man is, in doubt and darkness with regard to his inner nature, one most often does not know one's true vocation; those who do know their minds and are sure of their "mission in life" are the fortunate few, and very few indeed they are. Of the vast majority, some discover themselves only at the fag-end of their life or when they are already far too committed and in harness in alien fields and among alien faces; others do not discover themselves at all, they need no such revelation: these form the general mass in which the individuals have not developed so far as to come out into any bold relief, they are cast into the stereotype mould, moved more or less by the same general forces of nature and are indistinguishable from each other. It is upon this mass of uniformity that the totalitarian regimentation bases itself easily and naturally.

Still even if human nature in the mass is like this, what the totalitarian system does is to fix and eternise the mould. To admit Nature as it is and leave it at that, to arrange and

organize things within that given framework, is, to say the least, only another form of the old *laissez faire* system. Take Nature as it is, but go farther and beyond. That is the problem of all human endeavour.

In ancient times too there were conscious attempts to build and remould human society. The Rishis were not merely spiritual seers, but creators of the social order also. They saw by their vision the inner truths of things, they found principles and laws, right principles and correct laws which establish peace and stability, on the one hand, no doubt, but on the other hand serve also as the frame for the growth and fulfilment of the individual being. The king with his executive body was there to see that the laws were observed and honoured. The later law-givers (the makers of codes, *smritis*) had not the direct and large vision of the Rishis, but they tried their best to maintain the laws as they understood them, elaborate them, change or modify wherever possible or needed under given circumstances. In ancient Europe too, it was Plato who envisaged the ideal Republic, a government of philosophers —the wise who are not actively engaged in the turmoil of life, but stand aloof and detached and can see more of the game and accordingly

legislate all the better. In modern times also the rise of a Feuhrer or a Dictator seems to have been a psychological necessity: the mass consciousness is in sore need of a guide, and as the right guide is not easily available, the way of the false prophet is smooth and wide open. As a protection and antidote against such a calamity, we tried here and there to found and organise a government of all talents.

But again, who are the talents and where are they? For a modern society produces at best clever politicians, but very few great souls if at all, who can inspire, guide and create. Not a system or organization, but such centres of forces, with creative vision and power, it is that that mankind sorely needs at this hour. System and organization come after, they can only be the embodiment of a creative vision.

II

The economic status is not the only or even the chief or real status of man in the society. This should be an obvious truth. To reform or rebuild the society it is not enough to find a new economic basis, however more equitable and efficient. A man's value does not depend upon his wages nor even upon his

wage-earning capacity. A man's worth is not the function of his *labour*. To equate the two has been the capital error of "Das Kapital". That is not the Copernican revolution that is needed in the social body today.

Money was always a power and those who had money were always powerful in all ages and countries. Poverty annuls the entire host of good qualities you may have, says the Sanskrit proverb. Only this money power has been shifted from class to class or section to section in a society. In the modern age the demand and tendency is that those who are the first and immediate agents in the chain of the production of wealth should be given all the profit and all the advantage (barring of course the State itself which has the prior and major claim so long as it exists). The rest are considered as mere parasites. Those who do not thus directly produce or help in producing wealth are a burden upon the society and they have no justifiable place there: either they should change their vocation, declass themselves and become labourers or they must go to the wall, subsist somewhere somehow till they finally pass out of existence.

This theory of money power, in spite of its factual or practical truth, is not the whole

truth. This is, I should say, the very old Ptolemaic social system, in a new garb, which turns round man as an economic—and physical—being. The Copernican system would view man chiefly as a psychological centre. A truly rational economic system can be based upon such an inner view of the situation. A merely economic view would take man as nothing more than a wage-earning machine and that will give the society and its government a mechanistic pattern. It will forget this simple truism that a man's worth is not and need not be always commensurate with his wage-earning capacity or even his *usefulness* as a citizen (in the way the atom-bomb Scientists are proving useful today).

Personal value will mean then not productive value, but creative value, that is to say, the capacity to create values, that means the consideration of the psychological and moral make-up of the individual.

What is the thing in human society which makes it valuable, worthy of humanity, gives it a place of honour and the right to live and continue to live? It is its culture and civilisation, as everyone knows. Greece or Rome, China or India did not attain, at least according to modern conceptions, a high stage in economic

evolution: the production and distribution of wealth, the classification and organization of producers and consumers, their relation and functions were, in many respects, what is called primitive. An American of today would laugh at their uncouth simplicity. And yet America has to bow down to those creators of other values that are truly valuable. And the values are the creations of the great poets, artists, philosophers, law-givers, sages and seers. It is they who made the glory that was Greece or Rome or China or India or Egypt. Indeed they are the builders of Culture, culture which is the inner life of a civilisation. The decline of culture and civilisation means precisely the displacement of the " cultured " man by the economic man. In the present age when economic values have been grossly exaggerated holding the entire social fabric in its stifling grip, the culture spirit has been pushed into the background and made subservient to economic and other cruder forces. That was what Julien Benda, the famous French critic and moralist, once stigmatised as "La Trahison des Clercs"; only, the "clercs" did not voluntarily betray, but circumstanced as they were they could do no better. The process reached its climax—perhaps one should say the very nadir—in the Nazi experiment

GANDHI BHAVAN
Kumara Park (East), BANGALORE-1

and something of it still continues in the Russian dispensation. There the intellectuals or the intelligentsia are totally harnessed to the political machine, their capacities are prostituted in the service of a socio-economic plan. Poets and artists and thinkers are made to be protagonists and propagandists of the new order. It is a significant sign of the times how almost the whole body of scientists—the entire Brain Trust of mankind today, one might say—have been mobilised for the fabrication of the Atom Bomb. Otherwise they cannot subsist, they lose all economic status.

In the older order, however, a kindlier treatment was meted out to this class, this class of the creators of values. They had patrons who looked after their physical well-being. They had the necessary freedom and leisure to follow their own bent and urge of creativity. Kings and princes, the court and the nobility, in spite of all the evils ascribed to them, and often very justly, have nevertheless been the nursery of art and culture, of all the art and culture of the ancient times. One remembers Shakespeare reading or enacting his drama before the Great Queen, or the poignant scene of Leonardo dying in the arms

of Francis the First. Those were the truly great classical ages, and art or man's creative genius hardly ever rose to that height ever since. The downward curve started with the advent and growth of the bourgeoisie when the artist or the creative genius lost their supporters and had to earn their own living by the sweat of their brow. Indeed the greatest tragedies of frustration, because of want and privation, occur, not as much among the " lowest " classes who are usually considered as the poorest and the most miserable in society, but in that section from where come the intellectuals, "men of light and leading," to use the epithet they are honoured with. For very few of this group are free to follow their inner trend and urge, but have either to coerce and suppress them or stultify them in the service of lesser alien duties, which mean " forced labour. " The punishment for refusing to be drawn away and to falsify oneself is not unoften the withdrawal of the bare necessities of life, in certain cases sheer destitution. A Keats wasting his energies in a work that has no relation to his inner life and light, or a Madhusudan dying in a hospital as a pauper, are examples significant of the nature of the social structure man lives in.

It is one of the great illusions—or perhaps a show plank for propaganda—to think or say that the so-called poorer calsses are the poorest and the most miserable. It is not so in fact. Really poor are those who have a standard of life commensurate with their inner nature and consciousness—of beauty and orderliness and material sufficiency and yet their actual status and function in society do not provide them with the necessary wherewithals and resources. No amount of philanthropic sentimentalising can suppress or wipe off the fact that the poor do not feel the pinch of poverty so much as do those who are poor and yet are to live and move as not poor. It all depends upon one's standard. One is truly rich or poor not in proportion to one's income, but in accordance with one's needs and the means to meet them. And all do not have the same needs and requirements. This does not mean that the needs of the princes, the aristocrats, the magnates are greater than those of the mere commoner. No, it means that there are people, there is a section of humanity found more or less in all these classes, but mostly in less fortunate classes, whose needs are intrinsically greater and they require preferential treatment. There should be none poor or

miserable in society, well and good. But this should not mean that all the economic resources of the society must be requisitioned only to enrich—to pamper—the poor. For there is a pampering possible in this matter. We know the *nouveaux riches*, the *parvenus* and the kind of life they lead with their fair share boldly seized. A levelling, a formal equalisation of the economic status, although it may mean uplift in certain cases, may involve gross injustice to others. The ideal is not equal distribution but rational distribution of wealth, and that distribution should not depend upon any material function, but upon psychological demands. Is this bourgeois economics? Even if it is so, the truth has to be faced and recognised. You can call truth by the name bourgeois and hang it, but it will revive all the same, like the Phoenix out of the ashes.

If it is said that the proletarian—the manual labourer—is given economic freedom not for the sake of that freedom merely, but for the sake of the cultural opportunity also that he will have in that way. None can demur to this noble and generous ideal, but what must not be forgotten in that preoccupation is the fact that there exists already a culturally

predisposed class in the present society who also require immediate care and nourishment so that they may grow and flourish as they should. In our eagerness to take up the enterprise and adventure of reclaiming deserts and heaths and moorlands, there is a chance of our losing sight of the precious fertile lands, rich in possibilities that we already possess. The economic status has to be improved for all who are adversely placed in the modern system, certainly; but for a real improvement based upon just and true needs, for an adjustment that will make for the highest good of the society, what is first required is to ascertain the psychological status which should alone, at least chiefly, determine the economic status.

In the old Indian social organisation there was at the basis such a psychological pattern and that must have been the reason why the structure lasted through millenniums. It was a hierarchical system but based upon living psychological forces. Each group or section or class in it had inevitably its appropriate function and an assured economic status. The Four Orders—the Brahmin (those whose pursuit was knowledge—acquiring and giving knowledge), the Kshattriya (the fighters, whose business it was to give physical protection),

the Vaishya (traders and farmers who were in charge of the wealth of the society, its production and distribution) and the Sudra (servants and mere labourers)—are a natural division or stratification of the social body based upon the nature and function of its different members. In the original and essential pattern there is no sinister mark of inferiority branded upon what are usually termed as the lower orders, especially the lowest order. If some are considered higher and are honoured and respected as such, it meant simply that the functions and qualities they stand for constitute in some way higher values, it did not mean that the others have no value or are to be spurned or neglected. The brain must be given a higher place than the stomach, although all its support and nourishment come from there. Hierarchy means, in modern terms, that the essential services must pass first, should have certain priorities. And according to the older view-point, the Brahmin, being the emblem and repository of knowledge, was considered as the head of the social body. He is the fount and origin of a culture, the creator of a civilisation; the others protect, nourish and serve, although all are equally necessary for the common welfare.

Fundamentally all human society is built upon this pattern which is psychological and which seems to be Nature's own life-plan. There is always this fourfold stratification or classification of members in any collective human grouping: the Intellectual (taken in the broadest sense) or the Intelligentsia, the Military, the Trader and the Labourer. In the earlier civilisations—when civilisation was being formed—especially in the East, it was the first class that took precedence over the rest and was especially honoured; for it is they who give the tone and temper and frame of life in the society. In later epochs, in the mediaeval age for example, the age of conquerors and conquistadors, and of Digvijaya, man as the warrior, the Kshattriya, the Samurai or the Chivalry was given the place of honour. Next came the age of traders and merchants, and the industrial age with the invention of machines. Today the labourer is rising in his turn to take the prime place.

As we have said, a normally healthy society is a harmonious welding of these four elements. A society becomes diseased when only one member gets inflated and all-powerful at the expense of others or whenever there is an unholy alliance of some against the rest.

Priest-craft, the Church militant, Fanaticism (religious or ideological), Inquisition are corruptions that show themselves when the first principle, the principle of Brahminhood, becomes exclusive and brings in arrogance and ignorance. Similarly colonisation and imperialism of the type only too familiar to us are aberrations of the spirit that the second principle embodies—the spirit of the Kshattriya. Likewise financial cartels, the industrial magnates, the profiteer, the *arriviste* are diseased growths in the economic body of a modern society which has forgotten the true Vaishya spirit that seeks to produce wealth in order to share and distribute fairly and equitably. The remedy of these ills society has suffered from is not the introduction of a fourth evil, the tyranny of the Fourth Estate of the proletariate. The Fourth was reduced, it is true, to a state of slavery and serfdom, of untouchability, at its *reductio ad absurdum*. The cure, we say, is not in blind revolt and an inauguration of the same evil under a new name and form, which means its perpetuation, but in the creation of a new life and soul, that can happen only with the creation of a new head and front Zeus-like that would give birth to the goddess of light and knowledge, inspirer of a true Brahminhood.

We repeat a fair and sure economic basis has to be found for the down-trodden, proletarian or other. For the proletariate is not the only unfortunate in the human society. There are whole groups of the unfortunate in the three other Estates also. Or perhaps if we like we can extend the meaning of the term " proletariate " and include in it all the less favoured sections of all the Four Orders.

As already stated, the remedy is to be sought in the salvage of the individual. The present trend of social forces is towards movements in the mass. That was necessary perhaps; for larger, wider, indeed world-wide unities have to be found and established for the unification of the whole of humanity. But in the drive towards that goal Nature seems to have overlooked for the moment the case of the individual, and naturally, man has been blind and one-sided in his attempts to reform and and rebuild society and the world. This neglected thread has to be taken up again and put back into the web of social life. The value of the individual, the worth and speciality of each person has to be found and recognised; indeed it is round that centre that society can best be reformed and remade. And this can only be done by a spiritual

outlook. For, the true individual is founded in the spirit, the spiritual consciousness; so long as man is limited to his body, life and mind, and his functions are solely determined by his earthly nature, so long he must needs be taken as a mere element in the mass, the cosmic mass. The true individual or person emerges only when something of man's spiritual being finds expression in these lower elements of his nature. And when man totally transcends his inferior sphere of existence and rises into his divine status where things are marshalled and organised through each individual truth-centre, then only there is the chance of a perfect social system descending upon earthly life.

Perhaps this is a far cry from the level of our normal humanity. But things have to be regarded and moulded from the highest heights; otherwise there will be no real solution, there can be only a temporary make-believe and a final frustration.

PANACEA OF "ISMS"

COMMUNISM

Communism cannot save humanity. For if it means the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, well, a healthy normal society will not bear or tolerate it long—no Dictatorship, whether of one or of many, is likely to endure or bring in the millennium. In that sense communism is only a *fascismo* of small people fighting against a *fascismo* of big people. A society is not normally made up of proletarians only: it does not consist merely of lotus-eaters nor does it consist of hewers of wood and drawers of water (peasants and labourers) alone. Even a proletariate society will slowly and inevitably gravitate towards a stratification of its own. In its very bosom the bureaucracy, the military, the officialdom of a closed body will form a class of its own. A Lenin cannot prevent the advent of a Stalin. Even if the proletarians form the majority, by far a very large majority, even then the tyranny of the majority is as reprehensible as the tyranny of the minority. Communism

pins its faith on struggle—the class struggle, it says, is historically true and morally justifiable. But this is a postulate all are not bound to accept. Then again, if communism means also materialism (dialectical or any other), that also cannot meet and satisfy all the needs and urges of man, indeed it leaves out of account all the deeper yearnings that lie imbedded in him and that cannot be obliterated by a mere denial. For surely man does not live by bread alone, however indispensable that article may be to him: not even culture—the kind admitted by communism, severely intellectual, rational, scientific, pragmatic—can be the be-all and end-all of human civilisation. Communistic Russia attempted to sweep away all traces of religion and church and piety; the attempt does not seem to have been very successful.

As a matter of fact, Communism is best taken as a symptom of the disease society suffers from and not as a remedy. The disease is a twofold bondage from which man has always been trying to free himself. It is fundamentally the same bondage which the great French Revolution sought most vigorously and violently to shake off—an economic and an ideological bondage, that is to say,

translated in the terms of those days, the tyranny of the court and the nobility and the tyranny of the Church. The same twofold bondage appears again today combated by Communism, viz., Capitalism and Bourgeoisie. Originally and essentially, however, Communism meant an economic system in which there is no personal property, all property being held in common. It is an ideal that requires a good deal of ingenuity to be worked out in all details, to say the least. Certain religious sects within restricted membership tried the experiment. Indeed some kind of religious mentality is required, a mentality freed from normal mundane reactions, as a preliminary condition in order that such an attempt might be successful. A perfect or ideal communism may be possible only when man's character and nature has undergone a thorough and radical change. Till then it will be a Utopia passing through various avatars.

SOCIALISM

Nor can socialism remedy all the ills society suffers from, if it merely or mainly means the abolition of private enterprise and the assumption by the State of the entire

economic and even cultural or educational apparatus of the society. Even as an economic proposition State Socialism, which is only another name of Totalitarianism, is hardly an unmixed good. First of all, however selfish and profiteering the individual may be, still, one must remember that it is always the individual who is adventurous and inventive, it is he who discovers, creates new things and beautiful things. A collective or global enterprise makes for massiveness and quantity, but it means also uniformity, often a dead uniformity: for variety, for originality, as well as for the aesthetic tone and the human touch, the personal element is needed, seems to be indispensable. Education in such a system would mean a set routine and pattern, an efficient machine to bring out consistently and continuously uniform types of men who are more or less automatons, mechanical and regimented in their make-up and behaviour. An all-out socialistic Government will bear down and entomb the deeper springs of human consciousness, the magic powers of initiative and creativity that depend upon individual liberty and the free play of personal choice. We do not deny that Socialism is an antidote to another malady in the social body—the parcellation, the

fragmentation into a thousand petty interests—all aggressive and combative—of the economic strength of a community, and also the stupendous inequality and maldistribution of wealth and opportunity. But it brings in its own poison.

It is a great illusion, as has been pointed out by many, that a collective and impersonal body cannot be profiteers and war-mongers. A nation as a whole can very well be moved by greed and violence and *Sieglust* (passion for conquest)—Nazism has another name, it is also called National Socialism. Everything depends not upon the form, but the spirit that animates the form. It is the spirit, man's inner nature that is to be handled, dealt with and changed; outer systems and forms have only a secondary importance.

NATIONALISM

Again, Nationalism is also not the *summum bonum* of collective living. The nation has emerged out of the family and the tribe as a greater unit of the human aggregate. But this does not mean that it is the last word on the subject, that larger units are not to be found or formed. In the present-day juncture it is nationalism that has become a stumbling-block to a fairer

solution of human problems. For example, India, Egypt, Ireland, even Poland, whatever may be the justifying reasons, are almost exclusively, chauvinistically, nationalistic. They believe that the attainment of their free, unfettered, separate national existence first will automatically bring in its train all ideal results that have been postponed till now. They do not see, however, that in the actual circumstances an international solution has the greater chance of bringing about a happier solution for the nation too, and not the other way round. The more significant urge today is towards this greater aggregation—Pan-America, Pan-Russia, Pan-Arabia, a Western European Block and an Eastern European Block are movements that have been thrown up because of a greater necessity in human life and its evolution. Man's stupidity, his failure to grasp the situation, his incapacity to march with Nature, his tendency always to fall back, to return to the out-dated past may delay or cause a turn or twist in this healthy movement, but it cannot be permanently thwarted or denied for long. Churchill's memorable call to France, on the eve of her debacle, to join and form with Britain a single national union, however sentimental or even ludicrous it may appear to

some, is, as we see it, the cry of humanity itself to transcend the modern barriers of nationhood and rise to a higher status of solidarity and collective consciousness.

INTERNATIONALISM

And yet internationalism is not the one thing needful either. If it means the obliteration of all national values, of all cultural diversity, it will not certainly conduce to the greater enrichment and perfection of humanity. Taken by itself and in its absolute sense, it cannot be a practical success. The fact is being proved every moment these days. Internationalism in the economic sphere, however, seems to have a greater probability and utility than in the merely political sphere. Economics is forcing peoples and nations to live together and move together : it has become the soldering agent in modern times of all the elements—the groups and types of the human family that were so long separate from each other, unknown to each other or clashing with each other. But that is good so far as it goes. Powerful as economic forces are, they are not the only deciding or directing agents in human affairs. That is the great flaw in the "Internationale",

the Marxian type of internationalism which has been made familiar to us. Man is not a political animal, in spite of Aristotle, nor is he an economic animal, in spite of Marx and Engels. Mere economics, even when working for a greater unity of mankind, tends to work more for uniformity: it reduces man to the position of a machine and a physical or material machine at that. By an irony of fate the human value for which the international proletariate raised its banner of revolt is precisely what suffers in the end. The Beveridge Plan, so much talked of nowadays, made such an appeal, no doubt because of the economic advantages it ensures, but also, by far and large, because it views man as a human being in and against the machine to which he belongs, because it is psychologically a scheme to salvage the manhood of man, so far as is possible, out of a rigidly mechanistic industrial organization.

HUMANISM

So the cry is for greater human values. Man needs food and shelter, goes without saying, but he yearns for other things also, air and light: he needs freedom, he needs culture

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—higher thoughts, finer emotions, nobler urges—the field and expression of personal worth. The acquisition of knowledge, the creation of beauty, the pursuit of philosophy, art, literature, and science in their pure forms and for their own sake are things man holds dear to his heart. Without them life loses its charm and significance. Mind and sensibility must be free to roam, not turned and tied to the exclusive needs and interests of physical life, free, that is to say, to discover and create norms and ideals and truths that are values in themselves and also lend values to the matter-of-fact terrestrial life. It is not sufficient that all men should have work and wages, it is not sufficient that all should have learnt the three R's, it is not sufficient that they should understand their rights—social, political, economic—and claim and vindicate them. Nor is it sufficient for men to become merely useful or indispensable—although happy and contented—members of a collective body. The individual must be free, free in his creative joy to bring out and formulate, in thought, in speech, in action, in all the modes of expression, the truth, the beauty, the good he experiences within. An all-round culture, a well-developed mind, a well-organised life, a well-formed

body, a harmonious working of all the members of the system at a high level of consciousness—that is man's need, for there lies his self-fulfilment. That is the ideal of Humanism—which the ancient Graeco-Roman culture worshipped, which was again revived by the Renaissance and which once again became a fresh and living force after the great Revolution and is still the high light to which Science and modern knowledge turns.

THE MORE BEYOND

And yet this is not the grand finale, the *nec plus ultra*. For, man does not stop with man; in the tremendous phrase carved by Nietzsche, "Man is a thing that shall be surpassed." Until and unless man surpasses himself, finds a focus and fulcrum outside and beyond his normal human—too human—self, he cannot entirely and radically change his nature and rebuild his society on an altogether different pattern. Man has to reach his divine status, become the Divine, within and outside, body and soul; then only can the ills to which he is exposed totally vanish and then alone can he enjoy individually and collectively a perfect life on earth. Naturally man is not expected

to accomplish this mighty work alone and unaided, he can rest assured and comforted, for Nature herself is moving inexorably towards that consummation.

THREE DEGREES OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Declaration of Rights is a characteristic modern phenomenon. It is a message of liberty and freedom, no doubt,—of secular liberty and freedom—things not very common in the old world; and yet, at the same time, it is a clarion that calls for and prepares strife and battle. If the conception of Right has sanctified the individual or a unit collectivity, it has also, *pari passu*, developed a fissiparous tendency in human organization. Society based on or living by the principle of Rights becomes naturally and inevitably a competitive society. Where man is regarded as nothing more—and, of course, nothing less—than a bundle of rights, the human aggregation is bound to be an exact image of Darwinian Nature—red in tooth and claw.

But 'Rights' is not the only term on which an ideal or even a decent society can be based. There is another term which can serve equally well, if not better. I am obviously referring to the conception of duty. It is

an old-world conception; it is a conception particularly familiar to the East. The Indian term for Right is also the term for Duty—*adhikāra* means both. In Europe too, in more recent times, when after the frustration of the dream of the new world envisaged by the French Revolution, man was called upon again to rise and hope, it was Mazzini who brought forward the new or discarded principle as a *mantra* replacing the other more dangerous one. A hierarchy of duties was given by him as the pattern of a fulfilled ideal life. In India in our day the distinction between the two attitudes was very strongly insisted upon by the great Vivekananda.

Vivekananda said that if human society was to be remodelled, one must first of all learn to think and act not in terms of claims and rights but in terms of duties and obligations. Fulfil your duties conscientiously; the rights will take care of themselves; it is such an attitude that can give man the right poise, the right impetus, the right outlook in regard to collective living. If, instead of each one's demanding what he considers as his dues and and consequently scrambling and battling for them, and most often not getting them or getting at a ruinous price—such as made Arjuna

cry, "What shall I do with all this kingdom if in regaining it I lose my kith and kin and all that are dear to me?"—if, indeed, instead of claiming one's rights, one were content to know one's duty and to do it as it should be done, then not only would there be peace and amity upon earth, but also each one, far from losing anything, would find miraculously all that he most needed—the necessary, the right rights and all that they involve.

It might be objected here, however, that actually in the history of humanity the conception of Duty has been no less pugnacious than that of Right. In certain ages and among certain peoples, for example, it was considered the imperative duty of the faithful to kill or convert by force or otherwise as many as possible belonging to other faiths: it was the mission of the good shepherd to burn the impious and the heretic. In recent times, it was a sense of high and solemn duty that perpetrated the brutalities that have been termed "purges," undertaken, it appears, to purify and preserve the integrity of a particular ideological, social or racial aggregate. But the real name of such a spirit is not *duty* but *fanaticism*. And there is a considerable difference between the two. Fanaticism may be

defined as duty running away with itself; but what we are concerned with here is not the aberration of duty, but duty proper, self-poised.

One might claim also on behalf of the doctrine of Rights that the right kind of a Right brings no harm: it is, as already stated, another name for liberty, for the privilege of living, and it includes the obligation to let live. One can do what one likes provided one does not infringe the equal right of others to do the same. The measure of one's liberty is equal to the measure of others' liberty.

Here is the crux of the question. The dictum of utilitarian philosophers is a golden rule which is easy to formulate but not so to execute. For the line of demarcation between one's own rights and the equal rights of others is so indefinable and variable that a title suit is inevitable in each case. In asserting and establishing or even maintaining one's rights, there is always the possibility—almost certainty—of encroaching upon other's rights.

What is required therefore is not an external delimitation of frontiers between unit and unit, but an inner outlook and poise of character. And this can be cultivated and brought into action by learning to live by the sense of duty.

Even the sense of duty, we have to admit, is not enough. For if it leads or is capable of leading into an aberration, we must have something else to check and control, some other higher and more potent principle. Indeed, the conceptions of both Duty and Right belong to the domain of mental ideas, although one is usually more aggressive and militant, *rājasic*, and the other tends to be more tolerant and considerate, *sāttwic*: neither can give an absolute certainty of poise, a clear guarantee of perfect harmony.

Indian wisdom has found this other, a fairer term—a *tertium quid*, the mystic factor sought for by so many philosophers on so many counts. That is the very well-known, the very familiar term — Dharma. What is Dharma then? How does it accomplish the miracle which to others seems to have proved an impossibility? Dharma is self-law, that is to say, the law of the Self; it is the rhythm and movement of our inner or inmost being, the spontaneous working out of our truth-conscious nature.

We may perhaps view the three terms Right, Duty and Dharma as degrees of an ascending consciousness. Consciousness at its origin and in its primitive formulation is dominated by the principle of inertia, *tamas*;

in that state things have mostly an undifferentiated collective existence, they helplessly move about acted upon by forces outside themselves. Growth and evolution bring about differentiation, specialisation, organization. And this means consciousness of oneself, of the distinct and separate existence of each and every one, in other words, self-assertion, the claim, the right of each individual unit to be itself, to become itself first and foremost. It is a necessary development, for it signifies the growth of self-conciousness in the units out of a mass unconsciousness or semi-consciousness. It is the expression of *rajas*, the mode of dynamism, of strife and struggle; it is the corrective of *tamas*.

In the earliest and most primitive society men lived totally in a mass conciousness. Their life was a blind obedience—obedience to the chief, the patriarch or *pater familias*—obedience to the laws and customs of the collectivity to which one belonged. It was called duty, it was called even *dharma*, but evidently on a lower level, in an inferior formulation; in reality it was more of the nature of the mechanical functioning of an automaton than the exercise of conscious will and deliberate choice, which is the very soul of the conception of duty.

The conception of Right had to appear in order to bring out the principle of individuality, of personal freedom and fulfilment. For, a true, healthy collectivity is the association and organization of free and self-determinate units. The growth of independent individuality naturally means, at first, clash and rivalry and a violently competitive society is the result. It is only at this stage that the conception of duty can fruitfully come in to develop in man and his society the mode of *sattwa*, which is that of light and wisdom, of toleration and harmony. Then only do men seek to mould society on the principle of co-ordination and co-operation.

Still, the conception of duty cannot finally and definitively solve the problem. It cannot arrive at a perfect harmonisation of the conflicting claims of individual units; for duty, as I have already said, is a child of mental idealism and, although the mind can exercise some kind of control over the life-forces, it cannot altogether eliminate the seeds of conflict that lie embedded in the very nature of life. It is for this reason that there is an element of constraint in duty : it is, as the poet says, the 'stern daughter of the Voice of God.' One has to compel oneself, one has to force oneself on to carry out one's duty—there is a feeling somehow

of its being a bitter pill. The cult of duty means *rajas* controlled and coerced by *sattwa*, not the transcendence of *rajas*. This leads us to the high and supreme conception of Dharma, which is a transcendence of the *gunas*. Dharma is not an ideal, a standard or a rule that one has to obey; it is the law of self-nature that one inevitably follows; it is easy, spontaneous, delightful. The path of duty is heroic, the path of Dharma is of the gods, godly. (Cf. Virabhava and Divyabhava of the Tantras.)

The principle of Dharma then inculcates that each individual must, in order to act, find out the truth of his own being, his true soul and inmost consciousness: one must entirely and integrally merge oneself into that, be identified with it in such a manner that all acts and feelings and thoughts, in fact all movements—inner and outer—spontaneously and irrepressibly well out of that fount and origin. The individual souls being made of one truth-nature in its multiple modalities, when they live, move and have their being in its essential law and dynamism, there cannot but be absolute harmony and perfect synthesis between all the units, even as the sun and moon and stars which, as the Veda says, each following its specific orbit according to its specific nature

never collide or halt, *ne methate ne tasthatuh*, but weave out a faultless pattern of symphony.

The future society of man is envisaged as something of like nature. When the mortal being will have found his immortal soul and divine self, then each will be able to give full and free expression to his self-nature, *swabhāva*; then indeed even the utmost sweep of dynamism in each and all, *swadharma*, will not cause clash or conflict: on the contrary, each will increase the other and there will be a global increment and fulfilment, *parasparam bhāvayantah*. The division and conflict, the stress and strain that belong to the very nature of the inferior level of being and consciousness will then have been transcended. It is only then that a diviner humanity can be born to replace all the other moulds and types that never lead to anything final and absolutely satisfactory.

APPENDIX

SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEWS ON THE SECOND WORLD WAR*

You have said that you have begun to doubt whether it was the Mother's War and ask me to make you feel again that it is. I affirm again to you most strongly that this is the Mother's War. You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against others or even for India. It is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. It is no use concentrating on the defects or mistakes of nations; all have defects and commit serious mistakes; but what matters is on what side they have ranged themselves in the struggle. It is a struggle for the liberty of mankind to develop, for conditions in which men have freedom and room to think and act

*From a letter written to a disciple on 29th July, 1942.

according to the Light in them and grow in the Truth, grow in the Spirit. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side wins there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible; there will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have been created in which there will be a chance for the ideal to grow, for the Divine Work to be done, for the spiritual truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.

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